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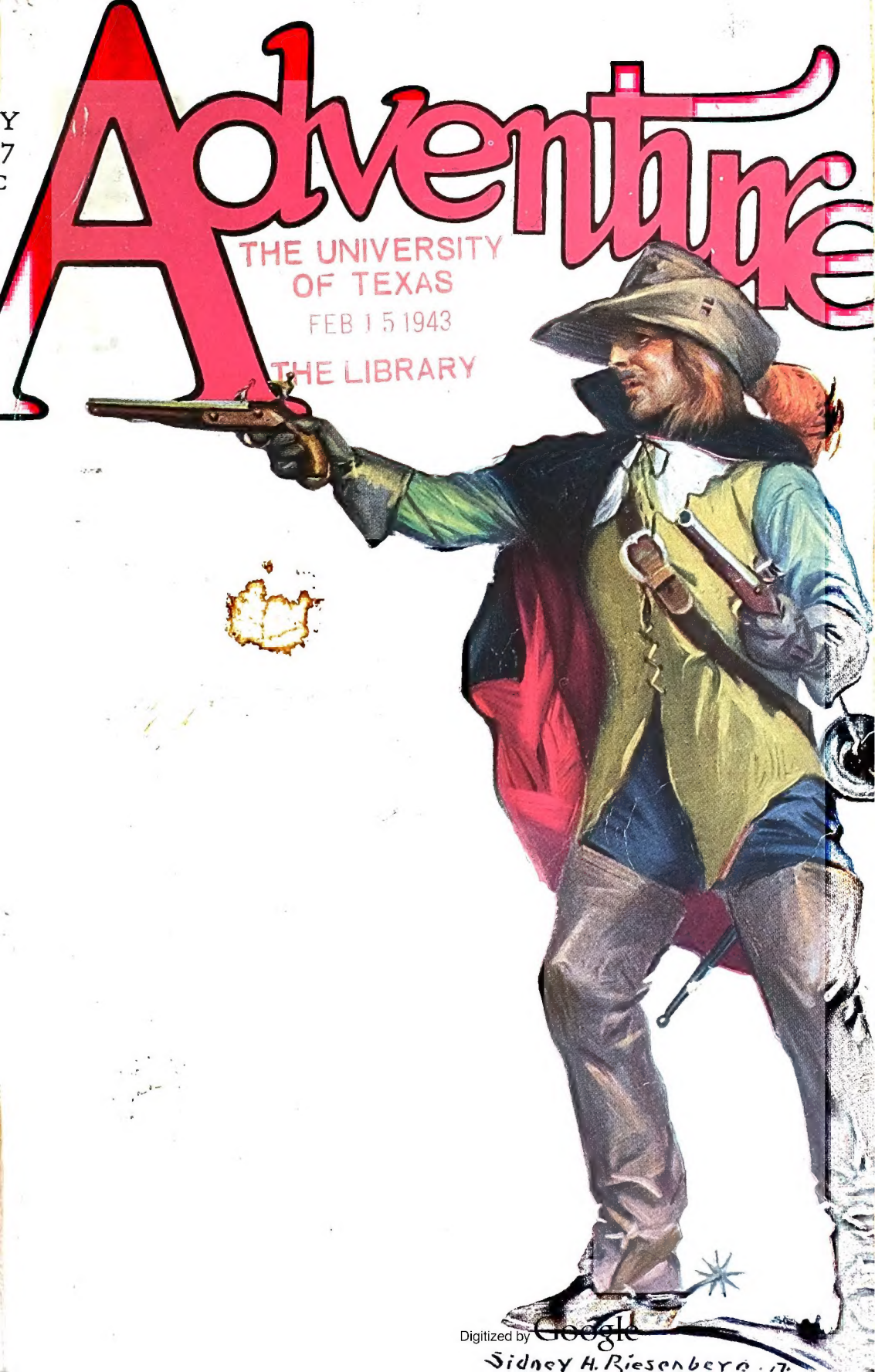

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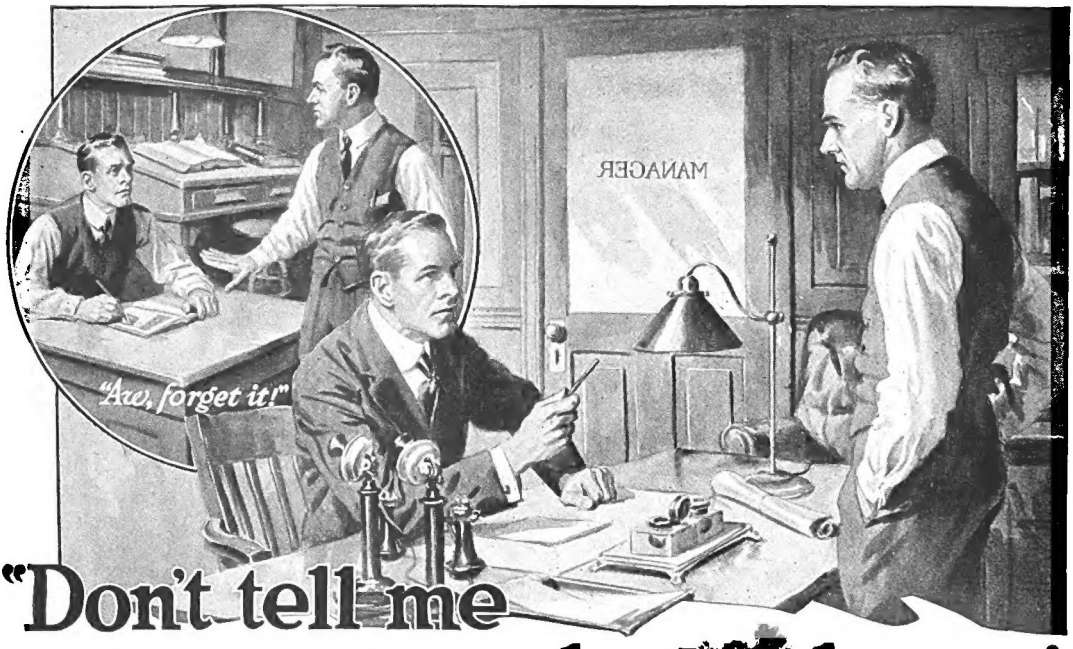

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Published by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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NEXT MONTH

The June *Adventure*, out May 3d, will go right on with it. *Adventure's* circulation has been growing so fast during the past year that all our previous records have been smashed to bits. The reasons for this big increase appear once a month, and the June issue ought to do a little more than its share of the good work. Turn to "The Trail Ahead" on the last page of this number to see what June will give you. Here are three of its stories:

A Complete Book-Length Novel

"Cuckoo's Nest," by Raymond Barrett, author of "The Red Alphabet."

"The Epic of Silver King"

By Arthur James Hayes, one of the best dog-stories ever written.

"Extrahazardous"

By G. A. Wells. We seldom publish stories of this type. This one was so big and strong that we *had* to publish it.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

Adventure
MAY·1917
Vol·14·No·1

The HAZARD of the HILLS

A Complete Novel

by

J·ALLAN·DUNN

Author of "The Island of the Dead," "Beyond the Rim," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE BUCCANEER'S BEQUEST

"THIS," said the girl, slim and dainty in her white linen gown, as she confronted the portrait, "is, as you should remember but probably don't, the picture of my great-grandfather, Eldad Bradley. From an artistic standpoint it might be catalogued as 'a study in scarlet.' According to the rumors that toadstool up every little while he was just as fiery as he is painted. We have never known whether to be proud of the fact that we have a bona-fide great-grandfather or disgraced because he was a pirate. Personally I prefer piracy to a mere matter of ancestry. Aunt doesn't."

Miss Abigail Griswold elevated her barely perceptible eyebrows.

"Piracy, my dear is hardly the term. Your great-grandfather probably sailed under letters of *marque*."

"I should have admired him heaps more if he had sailed under the Jolly Roger," said the girl, seating herself with her legs aswing from the mahogany table whose lights exactly matched her hair. "I like him. What's more, I'm proud of it."

It seemed an absurd suggestion, yet John Barrington, looking from the vivacious face of Jane Castle to the rubicund, belligerent visage of the sea-rover, was struck with a fleeting resemblance.

"I have always wanted to be a pirate," he said. "I do still."

Abigail Griswold sniffed.

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"So do I," cried her niece. "The Spanish Main and the Southern Cross! Hangers and flintlocks! Don't look so shocked, aunt. This is my birthday and I should be respected as the inheritor of the family secret and, let us hope, the family fortune. Read the letter, John, before we go up into the attic. We've read it a hundred times but this is a ceremonial occasion. Your health, sir."

She made a mock gesture of lifting a glass to the portrait as Barrington took up the folded parchment from the table and started to read the crabbed and faded characters with some difficulty.

"I, Eldad Ramsden Bradley, Master Mariner and High Sea Rover, in this year of grace eighteen hundred and sixteen, hereby bequeath to the issue of my flesh and blood the sea-chest now set in my library. Should there, as I fear, be no male issue, this chest shall not be opened until a century hence, in the year nineteen hundred and sixteen, or as much later as shall bring the said issue to a legal majority."

"Behold the issue," said the girl. "Though I don't like being referred to in such an inanimate way. And I am twenty-one, almost to the minute, at the present moment. Go on."

"At that time my living issue shall take the keys that are in the drawer of my desk and unlock the chest, taking especial cognisance of the contents of the flat tin box, acting thereon in accord with the instructions given to my solicitors, Gilderling, Hinton and Quigley of Liverpool, England.

"But if, against my confident belief, any male issue shall be born and attain full manhood, such issue may freely open the chest and communicate with the aforesaid firm of solicitors for their future action.

"Moreover, should there be any female issue so wrongly minded as to disregard the request of a man soon to pass into the presence of his Maker, it shall avail her nothing, until the hundred years is at an end and the fourth generation be freed from the shadow that I have laid upon my children and their children's children.

"Given under my hand and seal this nineteenth day of June in the year one thousand eight hundred and sixteen at my estate near Chester in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts. Witnessed by Joseph Talcott and Anne Addams."

"The language is a bit mild for a pirate," said the girl. "It should have been peppered with strange sea-oaths and sealed with a skull and crossbones."

"What does he mean by his fear of having no male heirs?" asked Barrington.

"I don't know. Gilderling, Hinton and Quigley may throw some light on the matter. There haven't been any at all events. Just a long string of girls who wanted to be boys, perhaps, like I do."

"Do, or did?"

"*Do.*" She flashed the word at him with a smile. "And in all that time, sir," she continued triumphantly, "no female of the family has opened the chest, though some of them must have died before their time out of ingrowing curiosity. My corsair ancestor seems to have dabbled in prophecy. By the shadow over the children's children, he means lack of cash, I suppose. He didn't leave much and we've got less. My grandmother had to sell off some of the land to a neighbor—the part that you bought."

Miss Griswold's sniff threatened to become chronic.

"Really, my dear," she said. "I fail to see how Mr. Barrington can possibly be interested in these purely family reminiscences. If you are going up into the attic this afternoon, let us do so. I have several things to attend to."

The girl made a tiny *moue* at Barrington.

"There is really no need for you to come up to that stuffy attic, aunt," she said. "Chaperonage and piracy are anachronisms. John and I go riding together and walking. Besides, I am of age."

"This is entirely different."

The aunt led the way with the offended dignity of a precisian in etiquette and the two followed with assumed meekness, the girl gaily jangling the keys as they climbed the stairs to where the impedimenta of several generations of a Colonial household littered the attic.

The light streamed into the spacious loft through a circular window, motes dancing in the ray that focused itself upon an old sea-chest, heavily bound with iron and thickly studded with brass nails on reinforcing strips of leather. The girl had brought a little bottle of oil and a feather with which Barrington lubricated the lock before he fitted a key from the bunch and, with an effort, turned over the tumblers.

"There," he said, "you must open it."

The girl knelt eagerly in front of the chest, her hair taking flame from the sunbeam.

"I feel like Pandora," she said, lifting the heavy lid.

A smell of spices pervaded the attic, a blend of sandal and camphorwood and strange odors that invested the place with an atmosphere of far-off lands lying beyond

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blue creaming seas and cloudless skies. As she took out, one by one, the contents of the chest, the fancy strengthened. To two of them, at least, the round window became a porthole, the loft a ship's cabin.

First came a blue coat laced with tarnished gold braid, then a pair of high boots of Spanish leather, the bucket-shaped tops turned over to show the vermilion lining. Some parchments, charts and documents followed, then a compass and a sextant lying beside a telescope and a pair of long-barreled pistols with their metal flasks for powder and bullets. All these were in a deep tray. Beneath it was another holding some daggers of various shapes, some with gemmed hilts, a heavy rope of coral which the girl clasped about her neck, a collection of thick-cased watches with fobs and chains and a heavy book that was inscribed as the log of the barkentine *Flying Cloud*, Eldad Ramsden Bradley, Master.

The second tray when taken out disclosed the bottom of the chest covered with gay bunting representing the flags of several nations. Beneath these was a neatly folded black drapery. The girl raised it exultantly flinging it across the two trays and over the practically emptied chest. The sunbeam made a target of the grisly device that grinned at them from the sable background —a skull surmounting two crossed bones.

"The true colors of Eldad Bradley, corsair!" she exclaimed. "I suppose he was a villain but at least he was not ashamed of his calling."

Miss Griswold had been examining the parchments. Now she exhibited one victoriously.

"I find here," she said, "letters of *marque* granted by King George the Third to Eldad Ramsden Bradley, Master of the barkentine *Flying Cloud*, authorizing him to fit out an armed vessel to cruise as a privateer and make prizes of the ships and merchandise of the enemies of Great Britain. That is not piracy!"

"It merely means that he secured a license to rob, like any modern hotel-keeper," declared the girl. "But where is the flat tin box?"

They went over the contents of the chest carefully and Barrington tapped and measured it for a false bottom without success, even Miss Griswold entering into the thrill of the search. At last they looked at each other with blank faces.

"Some one has been before us," said the girl ruefully. "Unless I am really Pandora and it has flown away. And this was to have been my best birthday present. Look at that skull grinning at us and Eldad Bradley downstairs in the library with the same kind of a smirk on his red face. If he has played a trick on me I'll bury him face downward in his own chest with the flag for a shroud." She tried to laugh but her face betrayed her keen disappointment.

"We haven't tried the lid," suggested Barrington. He measured carefully the thickness inside and out and his face lightened.

"There is two inches' play," he announced. "Surely the wood isn't that thick. He rapped it but it sounded solid. He squatted down before the trunk and considered the situation. Presently the creases cleared out of his forehead and he centered his attention upon the heads of the brass nails that were thickly set along the edges of the lid.

"I've got it, I think," he said at last. "Two of these are loose. Give me one of those daggers."

He worked hard for several minutes with the blade.

"Here it comes," he said as he drew out a thin rod of brass attached to the stud and running half the length of the chest.

He pried its fellow from the opposite side and a panel fell forward that had been carefully fitted and hinged to the under side of the lid. From the space tumbled a mass of closely packed lace and a thin document case of japanned tin. Within the latter was a square of parchment and another piece of prepared sheepskin, larger but in the shape of an isosceles triangle. On the square was a brief message.

"Communicate with Gilderling, Hinton and Quigley, Liverpool, England. They will answer in person. Send no funds. All is provided for. If, by any mischance, the land that faces the entrance to the house has passed from the possession of the estate, secure the same at any sacrifice with all due dispatch and secrecy of motive. The shadow has passed. Act freely and use rightly. E. R. B."

The girl ended the reading with a little gasp and examined the triangular parchment.

"It's a map of some kind," she said, her eyes shining. "I'm simply suffocating with excitement. It's sweltering up here under the slates. Let's take it down-stairs where it is cool."

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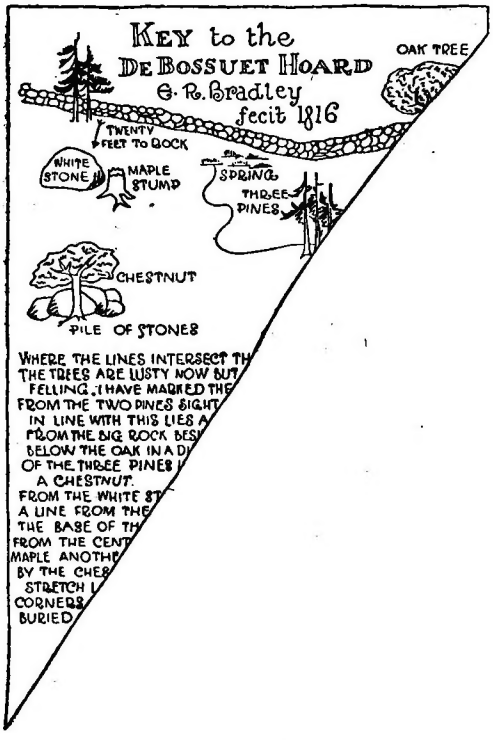
They left the pirate banner draped over the chest and descended to the library, the girl wearing the coral necklace and the aunt, whose patrician brow had not escaped the dew of perspiration, bearing an armful of the priceless lace.

They spread the map on the table beneath the gaze of the portrait. Originally it seemed to have been square but it had been cut diagonally with some sharp instrument. At the top were the words "Key to the De Bossuet Hoard, E. R. Bradley, fecit, 1816.

There was the slanting line of a stone wall, some trees, a white stone and a pile of rocks and a spring from which a stream issued. In the mutilated left bottom corner were some words hopelessly incomprehensible. That was all. Merely the half of a puzzle picture, its solution helpless without the rest of the map; the broken words of the directions gibberish.



CHAPTER II

BARRINGTON TALKS TO SARATOF

JOHN BARRINGTON surveyed himself in the long mirror with a satisfaction that held nothing of conceit. It was three years since he had come up to the Berkshire Hills out of South Carolina, broken down from too close application in an attempt to qualify for his chosen profession in the complex study of chemical engineering, a study undertaken not so much from the actual necessity of making money as born of the urgent desire to do something worth while as his share of the world's work.

Under the menace of his doctors he had exchanged long hours and hard study for long rides and walks, setting-up exercises and sleep unbroken by the momentum of an overdriven brain. He fished and hunted, and in Winter strode snowshod over the hills until the muscles that had never had a chance for full development, the stomach that had never been accorded full play in its digestive operations, and the fagged brain, set up a mutual and healthy co-ordination. His shoulders straightened, his chest deepened and his eyes brightened until now, in his well-cut riding clothes, he was a man whom other men would look at twice, and women several times.

His income equaled his needs. He had built a straggling, comfortable bungalow about a big living-room with a huge fireplace and surrounded it with broad verandas. One negress, a giantess who would surely have dominated her tribe on suffrage principles had she been relegated to Africa, a relic of his Southern home, attended to his needs and pampered him to her heart's desire, if not always to his. She, a Russian wolfhound and a horse made up the *ménage*, unless a launch and a canoe in the near-by lake could be so accounted.

His parents had been dead many years, and he had always been somewhat lonely and self-sufficient until, with his newly acquired vitality, a fresh element had quickened his nature. This was his friendship for Jane Castle, whose breezy radiance leavened his own to a *camaraderie* that was rapidly drifting, as far as Barrington was concerned, at least, into a deeper feeling.

It was the recognition of this sentiment that brought him to a review of himself both physically and financially. His reckoning did not meet the standard of his self-set code.

He lacked the money to give her the surroundings and comforts that he deemed her proper tribute from a lover and a husband, and a yet more serious problem pre-

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sented itself from the standpoint of his manhood. He had mingled little with either boys or men. Early delicacy had given him a private tutor and a natural retirement had kept him close to his studies and apart from his fellows. He summed up the situation as he seated himself at his table, lighting a cigar before he called over the wolfhound, reposing on a rug with its finely carved head resting on its paws.

"Come here, Saratof," he said, "and we'll talk it over."

The dog rose and trotted over to him, nuzzling its head against him and leaning its weight upon him, waving the silken plume of its tail affectionately. Saratof stood three feet at his shoulders and his fur was softly curling and white as that of a polar bear, save for one fawn-colored patch on the side. Barrington took the long, tapering head between his knees and went on with his whimsical, one-sided conversation.

"You see, Saratof, if this pirate ancestor of Jane's has hidden a fortune somewhere and she finds it—or we do, for she has asked me to help her—that puts us out of the running until we make good on our own account, until we make very good, in fact. And there's a side to that question to be considered, old white wolf of mine. I've got the brains and the knowledge and the will. Thanks to these hills I've got the strength, but none of this has ever been tested in competition. I don't suppose I'm a coward. The blood back of me was brave enough; but I've been a good deal of a hermit and that's a handicap.

"I wonder, for example, what sort of a pirate I should have made. You've had your fights, Saratof and won them, paws down, but I've slid along in my own rut and I don't know how I'd shape in a finish-fight affair. Modern business is piracy more or less, wolf. You use check-books instead of cutlasses and nerve instead of gunpowder, but the main idea is the same, to take all the other fellow's got or make him walk the plank, with sometimes a combination of both. I ought to be stanch but I'd like to try myself out before I recommend myself to Jane as a life partner. I'd like to stand up against some one man to man, for instance, and see how I felt after a good smash to the jaw."

He stroked the bridge of Saratof's Roman nose softly. The wolfhound nibbled at him and, seeing with his dark eyes that the talk was over, returned with dignity to his rug.

Barrington smoked on, wondering when the representative of Gilderling, Hinton and Quigley would arrive. The girl had cabled to them on the night following the opening of the chest and an answer had come back with a speed that should have made the eyes in Eldad Bradley's portrait blink at modern methods.

The reply had been, as Barrington phrased it, "conservative, laconic and cheap." It consisted of the one word "Coming" followed by the title of the firm. Two days ago a telegram had arrived from New York that mentioned unexpected delay. Since then Jane Castle had lived in a state of feverish excitement, her aunt had lost her appetite and Barrington had felt his share of the thrill consequent upon the finding of the mutilated map.

Barrington and Jane had tentatively explored the hill that mounted from the lawn in front of the old Bradley Place, as it was still called, though the persistent female issue of the buccaneer had changed the name of its residents several times. It had been vacant often until Jane, a comparatively impoverished orphan, had come there to permanently reside with her aunt, whose unclaimed dower consisted mainly of pride of race and an obsession for etiquette.

The quest had been unsatisfactory. The hill consisted of three rolling ridges, two of them topped by tumbledown stone walls. The whole incline was more or less boggy and what was a spring a hundred years ago might be one of a dozen places. Chestnut trees grew there with maples and beech and butternut and pine. Thickets covered the ground and densely mantled quartz stumps and granite boulders.

Within the century the hillside, practically untrimmed, save for decay or firewood felling on the lower slope, had seeded itself until the trees clustered thickly. Without more definite information and the other half of the map the search was merely an aggravation. Even if they had found the landmarks shown on the parchment fragment they neither knew what they were looking for nor where to look.

The telephone tinkled close to Barrington's elbow. Jane Castle was at the other end of the wire.

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"Mr. Quigley arrives on the five-ten train," she said. "We just had the telegram telephoned up to the house. I am going to drive over to meet him. You can't come because aunt insists upon playing chaperon and there won't be room with his baggage for four in the trap. But come right over after dinner. At eight o'clock. If you're a minute late I'll never forgive you. But I'll keep Quigley bottled and aunt muzzled till then. Good-by. How's Saratof? Give him my love."

"I'll share it with you, old chap," said Barrington to the dog as he hung up the phone. "And I'll tell you all about it when I come back tonight."

CHAPTER III

QUIGLEY SPINS A YARN

JONAS QUIGLEY was small and precise. His actions suggested the limits of red-tape bonds of precaution. His face, clean shaven with two inches of decorous side whiskers as its only adornment, was as expressionless as a blank sheet of foolscap. His pate was as bald as the top of an inkstand. His eyes were as black as ink and as immutable, holding only a somber highlight that sometimes, but seldom, brightened to animation.

His attire suggested the plumage of a crow both in color and sleekness and he held, by nature or acquisition, the faculty of appraising his *vis-à-vis* in a shrewdly unobtrusive manner. He was the eminent type of a family solicitor, a vault for the interment of secrets, fitted with a time or a combination lock as circumstances might warrant.

He was discussing the *Mayflower* migration with Abigail Griswold when John Barrington arrived, but Jane Castle cut short the conversation with the manner of one who has arrived at the limits of repression.

"It's just as well you're early, John," she said. "If I had held out another minute I'd have exploded. Mr. Quigley, this is the gentleman we expected."

Barrington grasped a hand that was cold yet felt surprisingly firm.

"I am glad to meet you, sir," he said.

"So are we all," chimed in the girl. "Now, Mr. Quigley, unearth the family skeleton."

With much the air of a polite sexton the lawyer unclasped a leather portfolio, extracted a formidable pile of papers and put them to one side, resting a hand upon them.

"I shall not take time now to read all these," he said in a crisp, dry voice. "I shall take up only those most important, leaving the rest for your later perusal, since I imagine you eager to get to the pith of the matter."

"Eager?" cried the girl. "Call it dying, literally dying to get to it, and have mercy upon me. Remember I am a woman."

There was the merest hint of a twinkle in the lawyer's gaze as he turned it on the vivacious face of his suppliant.

"I do," he said dryly.

She flashed a look at Barrington. Interpreted it meant surprise at the discovery of what Jane Castle termed "distinctly human" attributes in the little solicitor.

"Your ancestor," commenced Quigley, "was a notable if erratic character, Miss Castle. At the time of writing the communication you found in the chest and the one I shall presently read to you he was an American citizen, becoming so after the siege of New Orleans when he and other sea-raiders were commended for gallantry and pardoned by the President of your country for freebooting operations in the Caribbean Sea. I may add that he privateered under letters of *marque* issued to him by his Majesty King George the Third to a loyal subject desirous of scourging his country's enemies, and thus was not, under the recognition of international law at that period, adjudged a criminal. It was interference with American shipping outside the commission of their letters of *marque* that led to American reprisals in general against the corsairs of the Spanish Main."

Abigail Griswold gave a gasp of blended satisfaction and vindication.

"For the safekeeping of a considerable amount of treasure that he held reason to believe carried with it certain dangers connected with its premature use, he retained the services of Gilderling, Hinton and Quigley. Three solicitors of that firm title were then in partnership. They were the solicitors of the father of Eldad Bradley, Senior, at that time deceased. I may add," he said with a suggestion of pride, "that the firm has been established in Liverpool since the year seventeen hundred and fifty-eight. I am the grandson of the Mr. Quigley of the period of Eldad Bradley's visit to the firm. There is still a Mr. Hinton, now retired, but

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there has been no Gilderling active in the firm for fifty years, though the firm name continues.

"Captain Bradley left with us a certain sum to be used as retainer, fees and expense money. This sum has been invested and, unless you have further use for my services, I shall take pleasure in remitting to you the balance of sixty-nine pounds, seventeen shillings and —" he consulted the top paper—"fivepence."

He paused at an involuntary grimace from the girl at his euphemisms and deliberate approach to the main issue and took up a second paper with a little duck of his bald head.

"This document," he said, "will bring us rapidly to the heart of the matter. It is the original. A-hem."

He unfolded the crackling parchment and smoothed it out as he cleared his throat.

"The Statement of Eldad Ramsden Bradley concerning the Acquisition of the De Bossuet treasure and its Disposition.

"It is the fifty-ninth year of my age and, as I solemnly believe, the last. I write this in my house in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts near to the settlement of Chester in the United States of America, of which Country I am a free and fully privileged citizen. Dwelling with me, lying above in the south chamber, stricken with a grievous wound, is George Marvin, sometime known as Black George, lately my consort in privateering excursions in the Caribbean Sea under a corsair's commission from his Majesty King George the Third.

"Of our adventures which, I fear me, have placed our souls in jeopardy, I shall here set down but one.

"In August, eighteen hundred and fourteen, we encountered the French merchantman *Fleur D'Orleans*, convoyed by the French sloop-of-war *Thetis*, a hundred and ten miles due west of the Island of Guadaloupe, to which they were bound. We gave chase and my command, the barkentine *Flying Cloud*, engaged the sloop while the brigantine *Cormorant*, commanded by George Marvin, overhauled the merchantman which attempted to escape by crowding on sail. After a stubborn fight we set fire to the *Thetis* that sank from an explosion of her magazine. Coming up with the chase, which had sailed to the southward, we found her surrendered to the *Cormorant* and a rich prize, laden with silks and other goods of apparel and carrying specie to the amount of eighty thousand pounds. She was consigned to Monsieur De Bossuet, a wealthy planter of Guadaloupe, who was aboard, returning from France with his wife and two daughters, the latter having been educated abroad.

"I set down here in this the last writing that I may pen, that I have never committed murder in cold blood. My crimes have been many and deep but I have never wilfully countenanced unresisting slaughter. This habit, contrary to the custom of many of the rangers of the Caribbean, has caused me to quell many mutinies, but I rest easier at the last for this observance. My enemies were those of the King I then acknowledged and the loot lawful contraband of war.

"After the futile resistance of the crew of the *Fleur D'Orleans*, M. De Bossuet, who fought gallantly, was left a wounded prisoner. The pleas of his young and beautiful daughters casued me to take harsh issue with George Marvin for the preservation of them and their parents. Reconciling Marvin at the last with an extra share of the booty, I gave M. De Bossuet the choice between being marooned on one of the southward islands or set to sea in an open boat. This last course he chose to take with certain of the crew who had escaped the attack and, being duly provisioned and mercifully equipped, they did at last arrive safely on the east coast of Martinique, crossing that island and making their way by ship from St. Pierre to Port Louis on Guadaloupe, their destination. The *Fleur D'Orleans* we burned to the water's edge.

"Now at that time St. Pierre was an open rendezvous and market for the free-traders who bought their supplies and paid for them in gold, leaving the citizens unraided. Yet, later, on the landing of boats from the *Flying Cloud* and the *Cormorant*, an attempt was made to imprison them upon the information laid by M. De Bossuet at Fort de France, hard by. Only after a bloody encounter did our men win free, bearing aboard five wounded and leaving two dead.

"The crews were not to be withheld from reprisal at this treachery and Marvin reproached me bitterly for my weakness. Therefore a raid was planned upon the plantation of the ungrateful Frenchman who was known to be of great wealth and noble descent. His holding lay in the mountains back of Point Pitie and we sailed at dusk between the Islands of Maria Galante and Guadaloupe and anchored behind the headlands of a bay close to the Point, landing an hour before midnight.

"It was dawn before we carried the place. The fight was bitter and to the death and De Bossuet and his men, scorning quarter, were killed, after the house had been stormed on two sides. Our men ransacked for loot and liquor and found both in plenty, not sparing the latter. As was their wont, they costumed themselves in the apparel they found in drawers and wardrobes or tore from the draperies.

"I had discovered the gold in an iron safe built in the wall and had seen the bags counted and set aside for transportation. I was breaking open a great *armoire* of wood as hard as metal, bound and padlocked, and had just secured the contents of a tray that blazed with jewels when I smelled smoke and heard the shrieks of women in an adjoining room.

"As I entered, Marvin's second in command, a West Indian known as Le Creole Joe, was bearing off a struggling girl, one of the daughters of De Bossuet. The other crouched in a corner before Marvin. He attempted to seize her and she sprang at him like a tigress, striking with a dagger she plucked from the torn bosom of her gown. Marvin cursed as the blade slashed his arm and the maid darted under the pit of his arm and fled, with him roaring in pursuit.

"I followed hard on Marvin's heels. A drunken sailor had fired the house and the smoke climbed the broad staircase with us as we mounted to the upper floor. The girl took refuge in a room and Marvin flung himself savagely at the door that she had slammed behind her, bursting in the lock.

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"The scene abides. An old woman lay in a poster bed with dark hangings. One withered hand was about the shoulders of the crouching girl while the other strove to hold steady a pistol with which she fired point blank at Marvin and me, standing in the doorway. The bullet passed between us and starred the forehead of my boatswain, John Granton, who stood behind us in a huddle of staring, gaping sailors.

"Candles flared on a high bureau beside the bed. Gray wisps of hair streamed from beneath the laced night-hood of the old woman. Her face was seamed with age and her nose stood out like an eagle's beak between eyes burning like live coals.

" 'Ravishers and robbers!' she cried. 'Wanton murderers that ye are, now listen to the curse of Jacqueline De Bossuet. For the innocent blood spilled by you tonight the blood in your veins shall turn to torrents of torment. Your hearts shall be desolate and your brains the abode of cankerous remorse. Your sons shall rot in unknown graves and your wives become estranged from you. Yet shall your seed beget that my curse may linger. Women shall be born to your posterity who shall know the sweet of love and die before they enjoy its savor. Upon you and your children's children shall my curse batten and for a hundred years shall it twine as a noxious weed about your hearthstones.'

"We stood spellbound, held by the outbreathing fury of the woman and the rapid intensity of her speech. Only Marvin waved a hand as if to ward off the curse. Below, the fire had gained headway. We could hear the crackling of flames, yet no one stirred. Her voice rose to a shriek and flecks of foam came upon her lips.

" 'Desolate shall ye live and die,' she shrilled. 'The treasure ye have taken shall purchase only misery and death! My curse—*my curse upon ye—following you to hell!*'

"Somewhere a floor fell with a roar. The neck of the old witch twisted like a lopped twig and her head swung on it with the jaw dropped. The men behind us ran for the stairs. Marvin leaped for the girl. She shrank from him with staring eyes and plunged the dagger she still held into her white breast, falling across the coverlet. The blood that stained the damask was the last thing I saw before I too fought my way through the reek, driving the rabble before me to the boats down a road lit by the leaping flames."

CHAPTER IV

THE CURSE OF JACQUELINE DE BOSSUET

THERE followed an intense silence as the lawyer paused. To all of his listeners, remembering the contents of the sea-chest above in the attic with the piratical flag draped over it, the picture called up by the words of the long-dead corsair seemed vivid and very real. Jane Castle shuddered.

"It was a terrible curse," she said. "Though one does not believe, cannot believe, in such things. I am not superstitious but both my grandmother and mother died young—within two years of their marriage. So did many of my aunts and great-aunts."

"Only those who were foolish enough to get married," capped Miss Griswold. "It is all nonsense—but I shall change my bedchamber. I could not sleep comfortably in the room where Black George Marvin died, if only from a standpoint of hygiene."

"Curses," said the lawyer, "with their consequences, have always appeared to me to be the reflex of uneasy consciences which cause their owners to lose their poise, both mental and physical, subjecting them to misfortunes which they attribute to their ill luck and the influence of the curse. That and coincidences, which are much more common things than we generally imagine until our attention happens to be called to them."

He took a sip of the coffee that had been served and continued the reading:

"The thought of the curse clung to us like a leech. Marvin's arm poisoned and he never recovered the full use of it. His mate, the Creole, perished in the flames with the unfortunate girl he bore away. On the way to the boats the men were sullen, muttering that they were 'voodooed' as they term aught that smacks of witchcraft in the Caribbean.

"Even the sight of the loot failed to revive us. I had forgotten the things I had taken from the *armoire* until I turned them out on the cabin table of the *Flying Cloud* between myself and Marvin for a masters' division. The rings and brooches, necklaces, earrings and trinkets flashed under the lamp. Among them was a string of Ceylon rubies that were worth a prince's ransom. At another time they would have set us to laughter at our luck and a bumper of grog to pledge it. Now it lay on the table like a crimson snake while we looked at it with moody eyes.

" 'Put the —— things away,' called Marvin suddenly. 'They look like drops of blood.'

"He shuddered and looked over his shoulder and, since then unto now, Marvin has looked behind his shoulder as if he dreaded some horrid sight. Perhaps it is because he surely brought about the death of the maid after he had cloven her father with his sword. I doubt not that at this moment as he lies in bed in the south chamber he looks askance behind the curtains at his head for fear of what may be hidden there. 'Put the —— things away, man!' he cried. 'They look like the wound upon the maid's breast! Blast that witch, my arm burns like fire!'

"So I swept them all into a box together with seventeen sacks of gold and stowed them under the planks beneath my cabin table. One bag I kept out and we divided it for current needs.

"There was not a louis of it that was not tainted with the malediction. Some of it went to the crew and I lost three good men ashore at Port Royal in a drunken brawl over the spending of it. Two of Marvin's crew quarreled about their share and stabbed each other so that they were shortly thrown overboard in canvas shrouds with a round shot to

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speed them. I lost the major portion of mine in three unlucky hazards of the dice. Marvin spent his for two black boys who brought a plague aboard the *Cormorant* and nine of the best of his complement died in torment.

"The *Flying Cloud* struck a derelict in the night and nearly foundered. The men swore, though they could not have known, that it was the wreck of the *Fleur D'Orleans*, drifting about to accomplish its share of the curse. It might well have been. We were forced to careen the vessel for repairs and so lost the chance of a valuable prize that fell to the renegade Charles Gibbs.

"The American government was starting the scourge of the Caribbean that ended with Commodore Porter's clearance of the Main from freebooters in 1823 and the *Cormorant* ran afoul of an armed brig that carried away her foremast at the first broadside, only escaping under cover of darkness hulled in wind and water by a score of shot holes. A merchantman beat off my ship with half our metal. My men fought like whipped hounds. We ran into four weeks of calms and adverse currents and baffling head winds that shifted around the compass as if the Witch of the Winds herself was conspired against us. A hurricane left the trim *Flying Cloud* a battered hulk with the men in open mutiny and crying truly that we were accursed.

"The spell held. For a time it seemed to lift when we joined Jean Lafitte in Barataria Bay, Louisiana, and fought with him for General Andrew Jackson in the defense of New Orleans. For this President Madison issued proclamation recounting our merits and granted us general amnesty for past misdeeds. Then our crews broke up and I became an American citizen. But my wife, a Virginian of gentle birth, had become estranged from me and, with our daughter, lived in New Orleans, too proud to return to her family, too hurt to accept succor from me. To her have I left this estate and the hidden heritage. After I die perchance for the sake of her child she may accept it.

"Marvin was hurt in battle with a never-closing wound that has sapped his life inch by inch. Him I brought to Massachusetts where I bought this land and raised this house with money honorably earned in the fighting at New Orleans. The curse fulfilled its will with him for his wife has taken up her abode in Boston and will none of him.

"The treasure we have kept intact. A week ago we buried it in the hill that fronts the house, upon the second rise. Marvin was too weak to do aught but sit in the sun and watch, so I dug the hole and made the map under his eyes. There it is to lie until the century has lapsed. I cut the map in half. One portion I have sworn to deliver to the wife of Marvin in Boston, where she too has a daughter, setting down a fair copy of this for her guidance and charging her to take measures to secure the paper for her posterity.

"To the letter and the word the curse has held. My son has died at sea. His ship has never yet been heard from since it set sail about Cape Horn four years since. Marvin's boy joined an expedition to follow the trail of Lewis and Clark and lies out on the Western prairies with his heart cleft by an Indian arrow. Surely for a hundred years the blight will work until it passes in expiation.

"For myself, after I have journeyed to Boston, which will not be until Marvin is dead and buried, I shall take ship to Liverpool where I shall deliver my papers to Gilderling, Hinton and Quigley, the advocates, with the necessary monies to have and to hold until the curse lifts once and for all.

"Because the treasure came to us in evil partnership therefore have we so hidden it that the issue of the one may not find it without the issue of the other, unless Fortune shall so prevail and the one find while the other be missing. Should one half of the chart be lost and the treasure remain undiscovered then surely the curse still holds. It is for the will of Heaven to decide. If you, my flesh-and-blood issue, who read this, do discover it, see that your share be accounted for with wisdom and discretion. Season the spending with good works and pray for the souls of George Marvin and Eldad Ramsden Bradley."

"There is a brief addendum," said Quigley.

"Marvin is dead. He passed before I took this writing upstairs. His eyes hold a look as if he had seen at last what he has so long feared to see. I have closed them. I shall bury him tomorrow. E. R. B."

"Eldad Bradley came of a good family in the North Riding of Yorkshire," said the solicitor as he folded up the parchment. "He was early estranged from them and did not visit them on his return to England."

"It seems to me," said the girl slowly, "that the title to the treasure, if we find it, belongs to the issue of the De Bossuet family."

"There is none," replied Quigley. "We have made diligent inquiry. The family is extinct with the passing of the Guadaloupe branch. The name was proscribed in the old country during the Reign of Terror and all save Victor De Bossuet, who joined the cause of Bonaparte to save his family and property, were massacred during the French Revolution. The records are authentic. De Bossuet himself emigrated to Guadaloupe rather than endure the scorn of his equals on the one hand and the suspicions of the Bonapartists on the other. He was forced to leave his daughters in France to be educated as a pledge to the Napoleonic side. That he was a man of substance, his ability to command a convoy at a time so perilous to the French arms proves. But you need have no scruples on that score, Miss Castle. There are no other claimants. The treasure has been paid for, amply. It does no good where it lies. It may do good rightfully used."

"I suppose so," she said thoughtfully.

"The hillside is thick with forest growth

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and set with boulders and stone cairns," said Barrington. "There is no stream and no distinct spring. The water may have dried up and the trees marked died down. It will not be easy to identify stones. Without the other half of the chart we are helpless."

"Such, I imagine, was Captain Bradley's intention. He would not have made the quest too easy for unlawful possessors of either half."

"But where are we to find the descendants of George Marvin?" asked the girl.

"I had hope that they would have communicated with you already," said Quigley. "Nothing could have been done of course until the two halves were joined. We have kept in touch with the Marvin heirs. My delay in New York was caused by this matter. There was a Mrs. Judevine who lived on Long Island who was the granddaughter of Black George Marvin, and his only heir. To her the chart must have passed if it has not been lost. She had a son——"

"A son?" interrupted the girl surprisedly.

"Yes. The first male issue since the death of the original Marvin. He appears to have inherited some of the more vicious propensities of his ancestor. I may wrong him, but Mrs. Judevine has long lived in poverty and some months ago the son disappeared. Three days before my steamer docked in New York the mother died in destitute circumstances. There was some hint of foul play but none proven. She was on the verge of starvation. Apparently she left neither papers nor anything of value. She had never made any attempt to open correspondence with us and we, on our side, waited until we heard from you. Under Captain Bradley's instructions I should have visited you within a few weeks, had I not heard from you. We knew you were of age this year."

"But," said Jane, "if the other half of the chart is lost?"

Quigley shrugged his shoulders.

"I am still following up that matter," he said. "In that case you must make systematic search ot the hillside. You could clear it and plow it up if necessary. If you find it you should in fairness wait before opening the trove until young Judevine is located or determined missing."

"We must wait, of course," said the girl. "If we are to make use of the treasure it must be done in all sincerity."

CHAPTER V

THE MEN ON THE HILL

THE next morning found Barrington, mounted on his chestnut mare, cantering along the wooded lanes near Chester. Saratof kept easy pace with the spirited animal, displaying a dignified interest in what he saw and heard and smelled, never going far ahead or behind.

As he rode, Barrington revolved the growing mystery of Eldad Bradley's treasure-trove. The suspense had mounted so rapidly that it had now become of absorbing interest. It was with some difficulty that he fought down the thought that was partly wish and partly hope that the treasure would not be found and no barrier of wealth set between him and the girl. But he resolved to do all he could to aid in the search.

The news of Mrs. Judevine's death and the disappearance of her son seemed to arbitrarily halt the adventure at its most exciting moment. Quigley had volunteered to remain for a few days pending word from New York regarding inquiries he had set on foot concerning the property left by Mrs. Judevine. In the meantime he had volunteered to assist in the attempt to locate the hoard with the aid of the fragmentary map, declaring that he had long determined to make a vacation out of his impending trip to America. They had begun to like the little solicitor whose tape-bound exterior showed little of the humor and sound manliness that lay beneath.

After the reading they had spent two feverish hours trying to arrive at some definite starting-point from the words on Jane Castle's half of the chart. Written down apparently without deliberate intention they displayed a devilish ingenuity in thwarting any consecutive plan that was maddening. They told too much for patience and too little for practise. Barrington had a copy of them and, as he pulled the mare to an uphill walk, he conned once more the card on which he had set them down.

Where the lines intersect th
The trees are lusty now but
felling, I have marked the
From the two pines sight
In line with this lies a
From the big rock besi
below the oak in a di
of the three pines i
a chestnut.

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From the white st
a line from the
the base of th
From the cent
maple anothe
by the ches
Stretch l
corners
buried

The oftener he read it the farther off seemed the solution. He checked the mare to a halt on the brow of the hill, put the card back in his pocket and looked through a gap in the trees to the valley to his left. Half a mile along the road his own lane entered the highway. Below, his bungalow was hidden in the foliage, only a lazy curl of smoke betraying the activities of Amanda, his Amazonian housekeeper.

The hill dropped to a swale through which a trout-stream sparkled. The center of the brook marked the line of his own property and that of Jane Castle's, once one estate. The old Colonial house was surrounded by a lawn shaded with chestnuts and maple trees. Beyond it mounted the hill of their search. It was early and Abigail Griswold's aristocratic housekeeping did not keep pace with that of Barrington's Amanda. A trailing rose-vine marked Jane Castle's window.

As Barrington gazed, the slatted blinds that masked the casement opened and he caught a distant glimpse of his sweetheart, reaching out to pluck some blossoms. He removed his soft hat at the sight of her and sent a silent greeting out to bridge the space between them. It seemed to reach her for she looked up, though it was practically impossible for her to distinguish him in the shade of the leafy opening. But Barrington rode on with a light heart through the dewy morning.

Saratof, knowing that home was close at hand, had trooped ahead and stood at a bend of the road looking back expectantly at his master and the mare. As they moved on he trotted out of sight around the bend. The next moment Barrington heard a yelp of indignation and the wolfhound reappeared, standing in the middle of the road apparently facing something he hesitated to attack without his master's sanction.

Barrington pricked in with his spurs and reached the dog in a gallop, reining up at the sight of a man who lounged against the stone fence, arrested in the action of lighting his pipe. One hand clutched a loose stone on the top of the wall.

Saratof, accustomed to regard all men as friends, looked from the one to his master. As the man moved his arm he snarled deep in his throat, a guttural warning that coordinated with the gathering of his slender but sinewy legs for a spring.

"Keep that dog off, if he's yours and you don't want him hurt," said the man roughly.

"He'll bother no one who leaves him alone," said Barrington. "And you are on my property line by that fence."

"I'm on the public side of it, I reckon. I didn't bother the dog."

The stranger was clad in a new, cheap suit of blue serge. His hat was pushed back from a low brow on which black hair grew coarse and crisp. His eyes were small, dark and closely placed beneath thick brows, and unshaven bristles blued his lips and chin and spread across his face to the cheekbones. Black hair grew on the backs of his hands to the final finger-joints. An ugly, shifty customer, Barrington appraised him.

"The dog would not cry without reason," said Barrington sharply.

"He ought to be on a leash and muzzled. That's the law in New York."

Saratof emitted another snarl and then dropped back to the mare's heels at Barrington's command. The stranger's hand had slipped back to his hip pocket.

"He's dangerous, that's what he is," he continued. "If he shows his teeth at me again I'll shoot the jaw off him."

Barrington felt a thrill run through him and exulted in it even as his will dominated the coursing blood.

"You're carrying concealed weapons on your own confession," he said quietly. "And that's against the law in Massachusetts, my man, as you'll find out to your cost if you are not less ready to make threats. If you'd hurt the dog I'd have taken it away from you and broken it over your head."

For a few seconds gray eyes combated brown. Then Barrington called to Saratof and pressed his knees into the mare. The man gave a sneering laugh as horse and man and dog left him but his gaze had faltered.

Barrington rode on elated. He had voiced a threat that he knew he would and could have carried out cheerfully. The encounter had left him cool enough to realize the trouble he might have had with the frisky mare and the wolfhound, which would

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assuredly have mixed in any fracas that affected his master. It was practically the first direct affair of that kind he had not intuitively avoided from sheer dislike of a row. Now, in the consciousness of his strength and pliant muscles he regretted that the man had not provoked him further.

"I should have loved to have punched that blue muzzle of his, Saratof," he said as the mare stood quietly beside the lane gate. "Over, boy!"

The wolfhound retreated leisurely to the center of the road, took three increasing bounds and soared over the gate in superb style, his tucked-up quarters clearing it by a foot. Barrington watched him narrowly.

"You're all right," he announced. "That's better than you can do, Lady, with my weight on your back. We'll ride through."

He opened the gate that clicked behind him and passed on down the lane to his bungalow.

THE search started with an ardor that held through the long morning and only waned as the afternoon began to inexorably demonstrate the futility of their endeavors. It was warm even in the shady woods where Jane, Barrington and Quigley divided strips of the incline between them and, after a preliminary survey of the ruined wall that topped the second rise of the hill, systematically explored every foot from the bottom of the slope to the crest of the ridge.

From the beginning, disappointment dogged their efforts. The stones of the fence were finally discovered under a mat of brambles and ferns and, while they found several pines approximate to its line, there were none that could be safely specified as the originals of the two shown on the chart. From the sketches on the map and the broken sentences beneath them they had the following landmarks to locate:

Two pines	white stone
maple stump	chestnut
pile of stones	big rock
oak	three pines
white st- (one?)	maple
ches- (tnut?)	

There were white stones in plenty, moss-covered and hidden in brake and brush most of them, outcroppings of white quartz. They found nearly a dozen piles of rock, whether natural or storm-piled it was hard to determine, and several massive boulders that might appropriately be termed "big rock." But there was no oak tree of any dimensions on the rise nor maple stump. Maples there were in plenty, and chestnuts. A clump of pines might a century ago have had their nucleus in three trees, but it was all guesswork and there was no one to tell them the answer if they guessed right.

"I am not a good enough forester," declared Barrington at luncheon, "to attempt to place the age of trees. Expert advice might do us some good there but it is a hard problem to work out in the dark."

"It seems hopeless," sighed Jane, looking ruefully at her slim arms, scratched with briers and unfriendly twigs. "I've waded through a jungle of bushes and acres of swamp. There's no spring and no stream and I don't believe there ever were any."

"A century makes a big difference," said Quigley. "Bigger than Captain Bradley imagined. The severe Winters Miss Griswold tells me of would rapidly rot fallen timber and shift any cairns not substantially built. The task reminds me of the fairy tale in which the girl had to empty a well with a sieve. Like her, we have no real implement to work with."

"Only half a one," said Barrington.

"And no fairy godmother to help us out," put in the girl. "Only a great-grandfather who grins smugly out of his frame. I've a good mind to tell him exactly what I think of him. I met a woodchuck near the wall and tried to get some information out of him," she said whimsically, "but he was distinctly rude and unneighborly."

It grew sultry in the afternoon, the blue skies giving place to gray and lowering clouds. The summit of the highest hills disappeared in the mists. Their clothing stuck to them unpleasantly and they perspired at the slightest effort. When, at four o'clock, the girl proposed refreshments in the cool parlor of the house, Barrington and the lawyer accepted gratefully.

Miss Griswold complained of a nervous headache and prophesied a thunderstorm. The rain held up, however, and Barrington telephoned his bungalow and stayed for dinner and, later, bridge-whist, at which the aunt and the solicitor were so uniformly victorious that the game became monotonous.

"I'll admit that my wits are wandering," said Jane after her third revoke. "I'm go-

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ing to bed and will try to dream out the secret of the treasure-trove. You're as bad as I am, John. Go and do likewise."

"I shall dream of secrets," he said to her as they rose from the card-table, "but they will be strictly my own."

"Why so stingy?" she asked laughingly. "I shall catechize you in the morning, sir."

There was a gleam in her eyes that bespoke her suspicion of the nature of the stuff that Barrington's dreams were likely to be made of and he imagined that the knowledge was not unpleasing to her.

But there was little dreaming for Barrington that night. He awoke at midnight with the sounding patter of the rain upon his bungalow roof and fell asleep again until an hour before dawn when the double report of a thunder clap brought him to sudden consciousness as it seemed to threaten the bungalow with imminent disaster.

The lightning was incessant, the azure fulmination lighting up the woods and meadows with startling vividness. From his window he could see the back of the Bradley place, staring white between the winking flashes. Every moment intensified the storm. Electricity ran riot over the heavens, and the crash of the air expansions sounded like the almost continuous roar of heavy artillery. Saratof, nervous at the abnormal increase of voltage in the air, was crouched beside the bed and his silken fur crackled under Barrington's caress.

In one brief interval of the detonations he distinguished the call of his party-line telephone and went hastily through the rooms to answer it. The thunder drowned the eagerly repeated sentences of Jane Castle's voice for a while, but at last he caught their meaning.

"Come at once. Aunt is nervous. Quigley is with her. She saw men on the hill from her window."

BARRINGTON slid into his riding-togs, pulled on his fishing waders and snapped a slicker over all, slipping an automatic into the flapped side pocket and clapping a southwester oilskin-cap on his head as he ran out into the storm, Saratof leaping beside him.

There were lights in the windows of the Bradley place to guide him, but the lightning lit his way to the brook through which he dashed with the wolfhound splashing through the riffles.

On the further bank the dog suddenly wheeled with a smothered growl and darted away to the shrubbery that bordered the lawn, a white streak in a flare of lightning. A shot rang out sharply above the sound of the rain and Barrington whistled the wolfhound back from the laurels, not daring to return the fire for fear of hitting the dog.

To his relief Saratof came bounding toward him evidently unhurt and he ordered him to heel. As he reached the lawn a second report followed a flash in the thicket and the bullet hummed as it passed over his head. He whirled, swinging his arm full and free, throwing the missiles at his target much as a boy flips clay pellets from a cane, with an arrested action as he pulled the trigger.

There was a smothered oath in the laurels and the scramble of a hasty retreat. The rain suddenly increased to a torrent that was blinding and reduced Saratof's curly coat to the sleek smoothness of a water rat as he reluctantly followed Barrington around the house to the main entrance.

Jane opened the front door, her eyes blazing beneath the hall lamp. She had dressed in her riding-clothes of black-and-white check, ending in high riding-boots, and the long-skirted coat and breeches made her look like a slim and eager boy. In one hand she carried the sixteen-gage shotgun that Barrington had given her a few days before for her birthday present.

"You're not hurt?" she asked anxiously. "I heard shots."

"Some one tried to get both Saratof and me," replied Barrington. "But they missed."

"And you?"

"I winged him, I fancy."

"Good! I wish I'd been there."

It was no idle speech. The girl's face shone with pluck heightened by indignation.

"They were on the hill," she said. "Do you suppose they were after the treasure? Aunt saw them. Come into the dining-room. Quigley's with her. Hello, Saratof, you're a canine cataract. Go ahead and shake all you want to. Should one of us stay outside, John?"

"I fancy that the rain will sufficiently dampen whatever disposition they might have to linger, now they know we're all armed."

They found Miss Griswold in an elaborate dressing-gown, pale and nervous but evidently appreciative of the solicitations of Quigley who stood before her, smelling-salts

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in one hand, a glass of sherry in the other and a fan tucked beneath one arm. He had put on his black clothes over his pajamas and his suspenders trailed behind him like a tail.

The aunt moaned as they entered and extended a feeble hand toward Quigley who promptly handed her the salts.

"Not that," she said feebly, "the sherry."

She sipped at it while the lawyer fanned her and revived sufficiently to raise a hand to her hair.

"Thank you," she said. "That is ample. My hair!"

Her scant gray locks subsided from the draft caused by Quigley's vigorous efforts and she smoothed them beneath her cap.

"A shock, Mr. Barrington," she said. "A terrible shock. I had meant to change my room but the maids were busy. Tonight I suffered tortures in a nightmare. Black George—" she shuddered—"Black George was in my room, the room he died in, with a gang of horrible scoundrels armed to the teeth. They had knives in them—their teeth, you know. He demanded the laces we found in the sea-chest, and, when I refused to give them up, he fired a wide-mouthed blunderbuss at my head. I woke with the report ringing in my ears and the fire spurting from the gun. It was the thunder and lightning, of course. But it was very upsetting. I am very sensitive."

She closed her eyes, and Quigley, quick not to repeat his former error, refilled her glass and gave it to her. Between sips she went on.

"I lay there trembling with the world afire outside my window, trying to gather courage enough to get up and cover my mirrors. At last I did so when an awful crash made me look out of the window. Four men, one of them with a lantern, the rest carrying something that gleamed in their hands, were running down the hill. I could see them plainly in the lightning as they came out of the woods. Then they came across the lawn toward the house. It was too much for me. I fainted. I think I shrieked first. Anyway, Jane came and, later, Mr. Quigley assisted me down-stairs."

She gave the solicitor a grateful look at which he murmured deprecatingly, then finished the sherry.

"It's all over now, aunt," said Jane. "John saw one of them and shot him."

"Dead?"

"No such luck," said Barrington.

"Ah! That dog, Jane! He's ruining the rug."

Saratof, standing dripping by the table, put out an abashed tongue and retreated to his master.

"Never mind, Saratof, you're worth fifty old rugs," said the girl, stroking his head. "It's getting daylight. The storm's nearly over. I'm going to make some coffee and then we'll have an early breakfast. No one wants to go back to bed, I fancy."

The thunder was muttering away in the distance, and through the windows that faced the east they could see a streak of chrome and silver athwart the sky above the ridge.

"I'll take a look round while you're making it," said Barrington. "Come, Saratof."

"Then I'll go with you," said the girl. "The coffee can wait."

"Let me make it," offered Quigley. "I'm considered rather a dab at that sort of thing."

They left him with the aunt, busy with a percolator as, with the wolfhound between them, they went out into the sweetened air.

CHAPTER VI

THE OTHER HALF OF THE MAP

SARATOF led the way to the clump of laurels from whence the shots had come. Barrington could tell by his actions that the man was no longer there but they found ample evidence of the recent ambush in the broken and trampled bushes and a shovel left behind in hasty flight. The handle was smeared with blood.

"Some shot, that, in the dark, John," said the girl.

Suddenly she turned pale and steadied herself by clutching at his arm.

"He might have murdered you," she said faintly.

Barrington resisted the impulse that surged through him to take her in his arms.

"That's all right," he said. "He didn't. I don't fancy they will come round again in a hurry."

"Do you think the man you met on the upper road could have had anything to do with it?" she asked, the color coming back to her cheeks as she read the expression of Barrington's face.

"He might. He was a tough-looking cus-

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tomer. We'll have a look up the hill presently. That shovel looks suspiciously like some one after the gold and rubies. Is your half of the map safe?"

She nodded.

"Aunt put it between the leaves of the big Bible on the library sideboard," she said smiling, "as the last place thieves would be likely to look for it."

A call came from the house. Quigley was announcing the coffee. He had discovered the discrepancy in his attire and had wrapped a white handkerchief about his neck in lieu of a collar and tie which made him look ludicrously like a penguin.

The coffee over, a sleepy maid started breakfast and Miss Griswold and Quigley disappeared to their rooms to presently arrive in impeccable attire. After the meal, Jane, Barrington and the lawyer reconnoitered the sodden hillside. The girl made the only discovery—an empty tin of a tobacco more famous for its advertising than its quality. Barrington looked at the lurid label.

"The chap I ran into this—or rather yesterday morning—was smoking that brand," he said. "I saw the tin on the wall beside him. It's not positive proof, of course, for the stuff's popular. They don't seem to have done any digging."

"It might be well to guard the hillside," said Quigley. "I could telephone New York for men, unless there is some one in the village you could trust."

"They'd talk too much," said Barrington. "Let's do this on our own hook. You and I can share sentry-go, Quigley."

"Let's," said Jane. "It'll be fun. Only I am to take my trick."

"You forget your aunt," suggested Barrington.

She pouted.

"I wish I was a boy," she declared.

"I don't," said Barrington fervently.

The excitement of the night, the touch of the girl's hand on his arm and her tender solicitude for his safety had gone to his head —and his heart—and the words were not as *sotto voce* as he had intended. Quigley pretended to be minutely examining a bush as the girl looked toward him warningly.

"Good old scout," murmured Barrington, and the girl flushed divinely.

A maid came hurrying through the trees toward them with a call for Quigley over. "long distance." Barrington and Jane followed leisurely, a delicious silence between them. The girl gave one shy glance at him that was half inquisitive, half provocative, and John Barrington took a fresh grip on his determination not to utter the words that seemed ever leaping to his lips until the question of the treasure was disposed of.

Quigley was still talking when they arrived. He came in smiling at their curious looks.

"Not much, but something," he said. "The men I employed have found the goods belonging to Mrs. Judevine. They had been sold at auction. There was a mattress among them and the ticking had been ripped open."

"Where she had hidden her half of the map!" exclaimed the girl.

The lawyer nodded.

"Probably. And the copy of Captain Bradley's letter. It is a favorite but foolish hiding-place."

Barrington looked quizzically from Jane to the big Bible on the sideboard and she made a face at him.

"I should perhaps go to New York myself," said Quigley.

"Oh, no, Mr. Quigley!" cried Miss Griswold. "Do not leave me—us—in this extremity."

He bowed with an old-fashioned gallantry that was captivating.

"If I can be of any use," he murmured. "I have given the necessary instructions and they are competent operatives."

It was the turn of Barrington and the girl to become suddenly interested in outside matters as the aunt simpered and the solicitor's pallid face took on a tinge of color.

Miss Griswold excused herself shortly afterward to superintend the arrangement of her new bedchamber, and the three turned to another useless inspection of the chart and the documents left by Eldad Bradley.

"It must have been a night after your own heart, great-grandad," said the girl, apostrophising the portrait. "I wonder what you would have done. Sworn deep-sea oaths as you primed your pistols, I suppose, and led the sortie. At least you've brought adventure into these quiet Berkshire Hills, hasn't he, John?"

"Adventure and romance," answered Barrington.

"Have you any extra firearms?" asked Quigley presently. "A shotgun for

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preference. I take a week at the grouse every year and I get my share. I might at the least pepper them sufficiently to make them chary of repeating their visits."

"You are a brick!" declared Jane impulsively. "John, lend him your Greener."

"I'll bring it over after lunch," he answered.

"You'll do nothing of the kind, sir. You'll send for it and some clothes. You're not going out of this house. Amanda can come over here and keep us in good humor with cream-and-egg waffles, and Saratof can pick out his own rug. If aunt is to have her protector, I demand mine."

"I submit," said Barrington happily. "I'll telephone over. Amanda can bring me some things and the gun. I've a notion she could handle one herself at a pinch."

"Isn't it glorious," said Jane. "It's like living a novel. 'The Hazard of the Hills. Guardians of Pirate Treasure Besieged by Midnight Marauders.' We ought to fly the Jolly Roger on the flagstaff."

"And get a page in the Sunday editions," said Barrington.

"Heaven forbid," said Quigley with a fervor that made them laugh.

Amanda arrived with the shotgun and cartridges and rolled her eyes as she heard of their adventures.

"*An'* me sleepin' like a lamb," she said. "Massa John, you shuah got to give me a pissol or somefing foh me to put unneh mah pillow."

"Lambs don't pack firearms, Amanda," said her master, "but you shall have your gun. I've got another automatic."

"I choose de rifle, Massa John. Ef I shoot I want to shoot somefing that'll stop any pestercatin' rapscallion what comes prowlin' roun' these hyah premises."

IT WAS mid-afternoon when the chug of a motor-car sounded coming up the drive. The road followed the trout-stream, leaving it for a wide semicircle that reached the front door of the mansion and returned to parallel the brook, and they watched the approach of the automobile through the library windows.

"It looks suspiciously like my blue-muzzled friend of yesterday," said Barrington. "Only he's dressed for the occasion. If he was one of our visitors last night he's a cool customer."

The car stopped at the door and the man stepped out and left the motor in attendance. A maid brought in his name.

"Mr. Jim Judevine," she announced.

They started to their feet in astonishment and sat down again as the girl, after a look at Barrington and Quigley, said, in a voice tremulous with excitement—"Very well, Mary, you may show him in."

He stood in the doorway, trying to convert a sudden scowl at the sight of Barrington into a smile for Jane's greeting. He had changed his blue serge for a suit of extreme Broadway cut that made him look like a tipster in luck. A horseshoe of paste stones glittered in a vivid tie. His black hair was plastered down and his face was newly shaven though still blue with the aggression of his heavy beard.

Saratof growled and looked appealingly at Barrington when he hushed him, returning reluctantly to his rug.

The visitor came forward slowly, his broad-banded gray felt in one hand, a hooked cane swinging from his arm.

"Miss Bradley, I take it?" he asked in a voice from which he evidently strove to discharge the natural surliness.

"Miss Castle," she answered. "My great-grandfather was Captain Eldad Bradley. Let the maid take your things."

He surrendered them reluctantly and drew off his yellow gloves.

"I'm Jim Judevine," he said. "My great-grandfather was George Marvin. Him and Bradley was partners. Maybe you was expecting me?" He glanced at the map and parchments on the table. "I've got something in my pocket that matches up with that."

He edged forward toward the table, and Quigley dexterously and unobtrusively turned the map face downward.

"May we see it?" he asked pleasantly. "My name is Jonas Quigley. I am Miss Castle's attorney. This is Mr. John Barrington."

The newcomer grunted as Barrington nodded curtly.

"I've met him before," he said. "Him and his dog."

He slowly drew a triangular piece of parchment from an inside pocket, looking suspiciously at them as he did so.

"I reckon we have to trust each other," he said.

"Exactly," said Barrington evenly. "Honor even among thieves, you know."

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Judevine flashed a malignant look at him but set the parchment on the table, retaining a hold on it. Quigley matched it with the other half and they bent over it eagerly. The completed sentences seemed to leap at them out of the restored chart. The secret of the De Bossuet hoard lay before them.

A cry came from the door. Abigail Griswold stood there with one hand in front of her eyes.

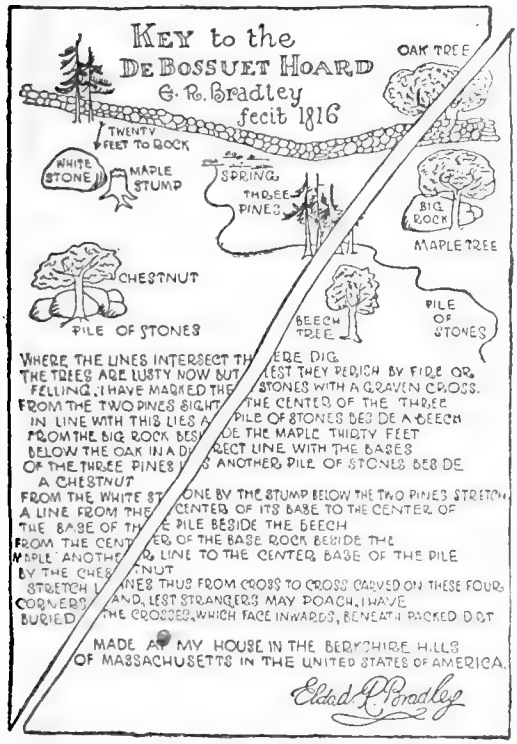
"My dear," she said in a shaking voice to her niece who had crossed swiftly to her side. "Who is that ruffian? He is the living image of Black George in my dream last night."

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF JONAS JUDEVINE

WHETHER by accident or design—the writing seemed casual enough—the wording of the second half of the map presented as great an enigma as that of the section held by Jane Castle.

But when the halves were laid side by side, they read:


KEY to the
DE BOSSUET HOARD
E. R. Bradley
fecit 1816
OAK TREE
TWENTY FEET TO ROCK
WHITE STONE
MAPLE STUMP
SPRING
THREE PINES
BIG ROCK
MAPLE TREE
CHESTNUT
PILE OF STONES
BEECH TREE
PILE OF STONES
WHERE THE LINES INTERSECT THERE DIG.
THE TREES ARE LUSTY NOW BUT LEST THEY PERISH BY FIRE OR
FELLING, I HAVE MARKED THE STONES WITH A GRAVEN CROSS.
FROM THE TWO PINES SIGHT THE CENTER OF THE THREE
IN LINE WITH THIS LIES A PILE OF STONES BES DE A BEECH
FROM THE BIG ROCK BES DE THE MAPLE THIRTY FEET
BELOW THE OAK IN A DIRECT LINE WITH THE BASES
OF THE THREE PINES IS ANOTHER PILE OF STONES BES DE
A CHESTNUT
FROM THE WHITE STONE BY THE STUMP BELOW THE TWO PINES STRETCH
A LINE FROM THE CENTER OF ITS BASE TO THE CENTER OF
THE BASE OF THE PILE BESIDE THE BEECH
FROM THE CENTER OF THE BASE ROCK BESIDE THE
MAPLE ANOTHER LINE TO THE CENTER BASE OF THE PILE
BY THE CHESTNUT
STRETCH LINES THUS FROM CROSS TO CROSS CARVED ON THESE FOUR
CORNERS AND, LEST STRANGERS MAY POACH, I HAVE
BURIED THE CROSSES, WHICH FACE INWARDS, BENEATH PACKED DIRT
MADE AT MY HOUSE IN THE BERKSHIRE HILLS
OF MASSACHUSETTS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
Edward R. Bradley

. The main clue was the pile of stones beside the beech, twice mentioned and shown in the sketch below the maple and a big rock, themselves shown beneath a tree behind the wall identified in the other half of the map as an oak. Two of the important points were thus shown, enough, with the mention of the "graven crosses," to urge a man like Jim Judevine to a secret search in the hope of unshared discovery. If the son of the last issue of Black George had instituted the midnight quest, he was, as Barrington had said, a cool customer; nerved by the necessity of fitting the two parts of the map to face those who, he had some reason to believe, might suspect him of the act. If he was guilty of the attempt, he was to be considered dangerous.

While Jane, who had left the room in attendance upon her aunt, was absent, Barrington and Quigley contented themselves with a close and silent scrutiny of the map, comparing it with their knowledge of the hillside in renewed hope as they recognized the comparative certainty of the four corners of the quadrangle in which the treasure lay buried being identified, a task made far easier by the mention of the graven crosses.

The girl returned with apologies to their visitor, treating him with a civility that Barrington considered unnecessarily cordial.

"My aunt has suddenly become indisposed, Mr. Judevine," she said. "She presents her excuses the more regretfully since under the circumstances we can not offer you the hospitality of our house. Indeed we have at present practically no accommodation."

"That's all right, miss," said Judevine with a boldly admiring glance that Barrington resented hotly. "It's nice of you to worry about me but I'm making out all right at Chester. You see I've got a friend with me. He's under the weather too. Didn't feel up to the ride today."

"I am sorry," said the girl politely. "Nothing serious, I hope?"

"No, miss." He hesitated for a moment. "You'll see him pretty soon, I reckon. He's hurt his hand, trying to crank the gas buggy."

Quigley and Barrington exchanged glances which Judevine interrupted with a scowl.

"I for one shall be glad to see your friend," said Barrington.

"What the devil have you got to do with it?" returned Judevine fiercely. "I beg your pardon, miss," he added in a less

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truculent tone, "but I don't see no use for outsiders butting into this affair of ours."

"Mr. Barrington is a very close friend of ours," she answered quietly.

Judevine grunted and turned his back upon Barrington who ignored the action by anticipating it.

"You have no objection, I suppose, Mr. Judevine," said Quigley suavely, "to telling us how you came into possession of this document?"

The visitor flashed suspicious glances at the group from under his heavy eyebrows.

"I ain't asking you where you got yours," he said. "It's six of one and half a dozen of the other, far as I can see."

"Miss Castle's claim is legally established," said the lawyer.

"So's mine. I got it from my mother, if you want to know."

"Before her death?"

The quietly dropped question raised a terrible disturbance in the murky current of Judevine's reasoning. His eyes stared and his jaw sagged. Then he caught it up with a click of his strong teeth.

"What do you mean?" he challenged.

"Your mother died a week ago today in Long Island, presumably of starvation."

Somehow the answer seemed to reassure him, though, at the beginning of the sentence, Barrington was certain that he had detected the look of a trapped animal in his shifty eyes. Then he recovered himself with the hint of a swagger.

"That's news to me," he said. "No reason for the old girl to starve to death that I know of. She gave it to me five months ago. I ain't been near New York since then."

"Ah. She took it out of the mattress and gave it to you, did she?"

Judevine's breath came short and he licked his lips as if they had suddenly become dry.

"I ain't on no witness-stand answering questions that I know of," he said. "Probably you think you're smart with your third-degree stuff. Yes, she gave it to me from the mattress. There was another paper, too, a long line of stuff that she burned up. She meant to burn the map too I reckon. Only she changed her mind. She was always changing her mind," he went on accusingly. "She had a crazy notion there was a curse on the thing. Said she could be rich as a queen any day she wanted to only she was afraid of the curse."

"There is a curse," said Quigley. "One that has so far proven extremely effective. But it is powerless to affect the legal inheritors."

"Then that lets me out," said Judevine. "Is that old buck Eldad Bradley?"

His unnatural callousness in connection with his mother's fate was utterly despicable, but Barrington fancied that Jane did not share his own contempt, reflected faintly but plainly in Quigley's impassive face.

"That is Captain Bradley," said the girl.

With an air of bravado, as if he too claimed kinship with the buccanneer, Judevine placed himself in front of the portrait. The painted eyes seemed to question the sincerity of the observer and he changed his apparent intention of a close scrutiny to a hasty survey.

"Let's get down to business," he said. "There's nothing doing tonight, I suppose. It'll be dark in an hour or so."

"Treasure-seeking after dark is apt to be unprofitable, not to say dangerous," said Barrington.

Judevine scowled and Quigley looked warningly at Barrington who interpreted the glance as a caution against any undue show of suspicion.

On the face of it, Black George's descendant could hardly be expected to show any refinements of manner or sentiment and his warrant of half ownership lay on the table in the shape of his half of the now restored map.

Quigley opened his pocketbook and produced some British stamps, fringed with an unprinted strip of gummed paper. This he separated at the perforation.

"We had better join the halves," he suggested.

Judevine made a quick movement.

"No," he said roughly. "My bit stays with me till we find the stuff."

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well then," he said. "We can at least endeavor to approximate the point of actual search."

With Judevine's stumpy, hairy, ill-kept fingers still attached to his portion of the map, the lawyer ruled two penciled lines between the bases of the piles of stone and the boulders.

"If this map is drawn with any attempt

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at scale," he said, "the place to dig should be there."

He marked a cross lightly on a spot slightly to the left of the base of the three pines.

"But we can hardly count on its accuracy as far as that," he concluded.

"The first thing to do, it seems to me," said Barrington, "is to identify the stones with the crosses. The rest should be easy. We can start work first thing in the morning."

"At daylight," said Jane.

"That's the talk," said Judevine. "No use lying abed when getting up 'll make you rich. I'll be there."

"We are going to guard the hillside tonight," said Barrington. "Some one was prowling round there last night with a lantern and a spade, which they left behind them. Do you care to join us, Judevine?"

"My chum's sick," he answered. "I'll have to be going. I ain't a millionaire yet—and that jitney outside is eating up my cash like a circus elephant with a bag of peanuts."

He forced a laugh, picked up his map section and stowed it away in his inside coat pocket.

"Well, good night, sir," he said to Quigley. "Good night, miss. I hope by this time tomorrow you and me'll be chinking the yellow boys."

His air of uneasy familiarity and his deliberate ignoring of Barrington at departure made the latter's blood boil and his fists clench involuntarily as Jane saw that the maid restored Judevine's hat and cane and herself escorted him to the door.

"It's too bad he wasn't in the laurels last night, instead of his friend with the hand that got hurt in cranking the car," Barrington said to Quigley. "That fellow's a crook from heels to hair-top."

"I think you are inclined to be unjust, John," said the girl, returning in time to hear the last sentence as the engine of the car started into action. "I do not intend to let prejudice enter into the matter. There has been ill-will and trouble enough connected with it in the past. Our hands should be clean to handle it from the beginning."

"That is more than you can expect from him," said Barrington and checked himself at the hurt look in her eyes. "If you want me to be polite to him, Jane, I will, but I'll keep my eyes on him. Who's going to take first watch tonight, Quigley?"

"I will," replied the lawyer, "if it's all the same to you. I shall have to run down to New York tomorrow."

"You are not going to be with us when we look for the treasure?" asked Jane disappointedly.

"I would not go if I did not believe my mission just as important," Quigley answered with a smile at her. "I want to wind up some investigations, if I can. But I'll be back on the five-ten this afternoon. Don't send over for me. I'll get a conveyance of some sort at Chester. I shall hope to find you successful." He turned to Barrington. "Suppose I take sentry-go from eight until midnight. It's dark by eight and light at four, I think. Then I can get some sleep before my trip, though you'll need it just as much."

"I don't expect to sleep until after we've found the treasure," said Barrington. "That arrangement suits me. You can take my other automatic. We'll walk over to my bungalow after dinner and get it."

"I wish I could watch with you," said Jane wistfully. "But aunt is adamant at the idea of such a glaring impropriety, and besides she is really upset. I shouldn't leave her alone."

On the way to the bungalow Quigley disclosed the object of his flying trip.

"I'm on the trail of our friend Judevine's associates in New York," he said. "He belongs to what we call the swell mob on the other side. A crowd who live by what they fondly term their wits, card-sharpers, confidence men, workers at any quick-money proposition that does not call for either too much work or personal risk.

"He's rather given himself away in my opinion," he went on. "If the map was concealed in the mattress, which seems likely, his mother did not give it to him willingly. No woman under stress would wantonly rip the only bed she possessed. She would cut the stitching."

"By Jove, you're right!" cried Barrington, admiring the little lawyer's shrewdness. "But that doesn't invalidate his claim, confound him."

"Not necessarily. He said he had not been in New York for five months," continued Quigley. "I doubt that statement. If it is a falsehood it may lead to the discovery of more important discrepancies.

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Frankly I suspect the man. Miss Griswold's idea of his looking like Black George was, of course, purely a mental hallucination but I should be glad to eliminate him from the matter entirely if it can be done in all fairness. I said nothing of this to Miss Castle advisedly. If I am wrong in my conjectures and his claim is valid it would be idle to attempt to bias her beforehand. She is inclined to be over scrupulously fair in the whole affair."

"So I noticed," said Barrington a trifle bitterly.

CHAPTER VIII

BARRINGTON TESTS HIS MANHOOD

DAWN was streaking the tree trunks and paling Barrington's lantern when he saw Jane Castle coming through the woods. He had spent his vigil in the neighborhood of the spot marked by Quigley on the map. The hours had not passed pleasantly. He found it hard to hold thoughts entirely unselfish at the quickening prospects of Jane's enrichment.

"It's a fine thing for her, of course," he told himself. "Though it puts a barrier up between an heiress and a poor devil like me. I suppose it's not unnatural to be envious of a crook like Judevine sharing her luck. He seems to think it a link between them, confound him. I shall have to turn commercial pirate myself to try and even matters. It's not likely she'll stay cooped up here once she has the means to travel. And that means she'll soon be meeting a hundred men more likely to suit her than John Barrington. I hope Quigley unmasks Judevine. If he does or if he doesn't I'm not going to stand his cheek much longer."

But his ill-humor speedily evaporated at the sight of Jane, trim in her riding togs, striding knee high through the ferns, her smiling face fresh from sleep, fair as the dawn itself, he thought, as he answered her cheery hail.

"Breakfast, John!" she cried. "Amanda's up and the waffle-iron is heating. I suppose we have to eat, though I've lost my appetite temporarily. Did anything happen?"

"I saw your friend the woodchuck," he answered, entering into her mood. "He's under that rock. Perhaps he is the fairy guardian of the hoard."

"I have been wondering what I'll do with it, John," she said. "I'm going to put half of it away for charity of some sort. You'll have to help me choose where to place it."

Barrington's admiring look checked her speech for the moment and she turned toward the house. The flush upon her face was not entirely that of the mounting sun.

"I wonder what time Mr. Judevine will arrive?" she said. "I hope he won't be late."

"He won't," said Barrington.

In this he was correct. Judevine arrived in the motor-car before the early breakfast was finished. He accepted a cup of coffee from Jane with a banality about its sweetening that made the girl wince and Barrington fairly ache with the desire to toss the steaming contents of the cup in the boorish face.

He had brought his friend with him, a squat man with restless eyes in a swarthy face of distinctly Hebraic mold. He said little, refusing the coffee and sat nursing his bandaged hand, his eyes roving around the room as if he were mentally appraising it for a cash offer, his look sour when it met Barrington's.

Judevine lingered in the hall as they started out.

"My pal offsets your outsider," he said to the girl. "He can't help us much this morning on account of his hand, but you see I was flat for a while lately and he staked me so I could get some decent duds before I showed up here."

He strutted with self-satisfaction as he crossed the threshold. Barrington, standing by the door to let Jane pass out before him, overheard the speech and choked down the mounting irritation that culminated at that moment in an almost overmastering desire to speed Judevine's exit with a well-placed kick.

"I didn't bring any tools," said Judevine, "because I naturally didn't have any with me and the shops were closed."

They secured some implements from the garden tool-house and divided the burden among the men. Barrington took a lively pleasure in offering the blood-stained shovel to the companion of Judevine.

The man turned a dusky purple as he refused it.

"I only got one hand," he said in a husky guttural.

It was hard work and the day was hot.

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Barrington watched with a malicious satisfaction the sweat pouring from Judevine's face as he occasionally straightened up to stretch his muscles. He labored feverishly, partly, Barrington thought, to attract the attention of the girl but attacking the job before him with a determination that bespoke a keen anxiety to realize its successful ending with all speed.

"Where's the lawyer chap?" he asked at the picnic lunch that Amanda sent out to them.

"Gone to New York," answered Jane.

A swift look passed between the two men and Judevine announced his intention of foregoing the rest of his lunch and returning to work.

"I'll get stiffened up and logy if I sit here and eat any more," he said, repressing a groan as he stood up.

By the middle of the afternoon they had dug half a dozen likely boulders from their earthy foundations and cleared the base of four piles of rocks. Jane aided in the search for the graven crosses, the squat Jew, with the face of a rat, scraping away with his able hand at the dirt and moss. But they found no markings.

"We need some soup, Jim," said the Jew once in an undertone, and quailed at the fierce look Judevine bestowed upon him.

"Soup's slang for blasting-stuff, miss," the latter explained to Jane. "It wouldn't be no good though. We might break one of them crosses we're looking for all to pieces."

At half-past five Judevine called a halt. His hands were blistered so that he could hardly hold pick or shovel, much less handle them to any advantage. The Hebrew had bruised his already damaged hand and had retreated half an hour before to a shady bank where he lay asleep.

"We're on the wrong track," declared Judevine. "But I'm all in. I'm a bit soft, I'll admit, but I couldn't do another tap if there was a thousand dollars a minute to pay for it."

He flung himself luxuriously on a bed of moss and maidenhair close to where Jane sat on a fallen log, her face a little dejected.

"I'm tired too," she said. "What are you going to do with your share of the treasure, Mr. Judevine?"

Judevine glanced at Barrington who was picking at a stubborn block of white quartz.

"Me?" he queried, looking up into her face. "Why I'm going to spend it. And I'm some kale-spreader when I get started. I could show you how to get the worth of your bit, Miss Jane."

She frowned at the familiar use of her name but he went on without noticing it.

"Why you might as well be in a deaf-and-dumb asylum as buried in this neck of the woods," he said. "A girl like you! In New York you'd have 'em all lined up to see you go by. This stake we're after is a sort of mutual proposition it seems to me, Miss Jane. We ought to celebrate it together a bit. I reckon a girl always knows what to do with money, 'specially a handsome high-stepper like you. Dresses and diamonds! With the right duds you could make 'em all sit up and take notice on Broadway. And I could introduce you to the Great White Way right. Better take a trip with me to the village and we'll smear a slice of the pie where we can get a run for our money. What do you say? It 'ud be a shame to split the pot."

"I don't know what you mean. I don't understand half of what you are talking about," she said with an uneasy look at Barrington.

Her tone would have frozen the advances of any one less fatuous and more cultured. Judevine merely laughed. Barrington had gone in search of a mislaid crowbar and was temporarily out of sight.

"Oh yes you do," went on Judevine. "You know what I mean all right. You're a woman and I'm a man. I'd be a good match for you. You're a cut over me in some ways but I can catch on when I want to and I'll show you the life. Money—that's the thing to make things hum to the right tune. Ah!" He leaned back ecstatically. "We can do Palm Beach and Atlantic City. We can follow the ponies all over the circuit and not worry about it if we do drop a century spot or so on the wrong horse. I'm no piker, Miss Jane. I'm a live one, I am and so are you, I'll be bound, when you get started."

She shrank from his bold leer of estimate with a look which he misinterpreted.

"You don't need to be afraid of me," he continued. "I know how to handle a woman proper. I ain't no country dude who thinks he's better than a man who's gone the pace and knows how to keep moving. You ain't got a ring on your pretty fingers, have you? We'll make a showcase out of them, first thing, that'll make 'em blink. I know where there's sparklers to be got cheap——"

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He reached for her hand and she withdrew it with a gesture of repulsion that even he could not fail to interpret.

"Think you're too good for me, do you?" he said, his face flushed with swift resentment. "Well, you ain't. There wasn't much to choose between old Bradley and George Marvin by all accounts, and there ain't now between you and me."

The girl rose to her feet and he jumped up and faced her. His eyes glittered and their whites were suffused with blood. As she stepped backward he made a motion toward her. A tree trunk stopped her progress.

Jane Castle was not the girl to scream. She faced Judevine bravely, though her heart was beating wildly and her throat was dry.

"You coward," she said, "you low-bred coward."

JUDEVINE laughed. It stopped at his lips as the girl was gently brushed to one side and Barrington, with his fists doubled, stood between her and Judevine.

"You dirty blackguard," he said, "get out of these woods."

"Not on your say-so," and Judevine uttered an unthinkable epithet.

Barrington's fist flashed out and caught him flush on the jaw, spilling the words before they were fully syllabled. Judevine's hand slipped to his back pocket and Barrington leaped at him, clutching his wrist and tearing the half-drawn pistol from his grasp to send it whirling away into the brush.

"Now stand up and take your beating," he said.

Judevine fought with the desperate fury of a cornered rat. Somewhere he had picked up a smattering of science, more than Barrington possessed who had not put on the gloves half a dozen times in his life, and to this he added every despicable trick of foul play that is practised on the side streets and alleys of New York. The girl leaned wide-eyed against the tree trunk, watching the struggling men, powerless to aid or interfere. Above, the Hebrew snored in the thicket.

At first Judevine's blows got through Barrington's unskilled guard with bewildering regularity but he fought on in a cold wrath that invested him with a strange confidence that the issue would see him triumphant. It was a righteous anger to begin with and the veriest coward fights best beneath the eyes of his lady.

He began to box warily, finding that he could withstand Judevine's rushes and get in one or two telling blows in return that began to slow up the attack. But, with the one fighting fair and the other trying to fight foul, the outcome was set on uncertainties.

At close quarters Judevine hit him savagely in the groin. Pain stabbed him coupled with a deadly nausea through which he saw the brutal face of Judevine, blood-smeared, distorted into a grin of triumph. He groped for him and they grappled. He leaned all his tortured weight upon the other and they went down together in the ferns, thrashing and tumbling in the green tangle.

His head cleared and the nausea passed as they rolled almost to the girl's feet. Then his head smashed against a quartz boulder and he could feel the warm gush of blood as skin and flesh were scraped away from his cheek. The blow started perilously near his temple, near enough to partially stun him.

From that on he fought in a cloud, striving with all his will to keep coordination in the arms that wanted to droop and the legs that wanted to sag. Judevine's hands were feeling for his throat. He felt thumbs probing for the corners of his eyes and roused himself to a rally that broke loose the grip.

The wood swam about him as he rose, a green mist with the white face of the girl looming through it like a pallid moon. The next instant Judevine had flung himself at his knees and once more they fought over the ground.

Barrington sensed that his strength was ebbing and for a while he resisted passively, his head tucked against Judevine's chest, waiting for the dizziness to pass long enough for him to muster his forces into one fierce assault. He was undermost when his position on the slope of the hill with his legs above his head gave him the momentary advantage.

With all the power of his loins and thighs he raised his knees in one mighty heave that sent Judevine asprawl behind him. Twisting like a cat he fell upon him, pressing one forearm across Judevine's throat. He felt him writhe under him like a snake and saw the evil mouth open gaspingly. Then Judevine in a frenzy managed to raise his

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head and sink his teeth in the flesh of Barrington's arm below the wrist.

The tearing pain of it brought back all of Barrington's strength for a few indignant seconds. He tore free his arm, dripping with blood, and rained blow upon blow down upon the face beneath him. He felt Judevine's chest collapse and his arms grow limp and rose slowly, suddenly very tired, reeling like a drunken man, striving to keep erect and find Jane's face in the green mist. He vaguely heard and recognized her scream of warning, the mist cleared a little and he saw, not Jane, but the Jew, stealing down like an evil gnome in the dusk, a knife in his hand that gleamed dully and his eyes like coals in the light of the afterglow.

He strove in vain to brace himself to meet the new attack. His motor nerves were short-circuited, his arms refused to lift and he held the sensation of having no legs, only a body floating in mid-air and a brain that reiterated the suggestion that he was very, very tired. Then outraged Nature asserted herself and he pitched forward on his hands and knees, then dropped inert close to the still form of Judevine.

As the Jew stole down the hill Jane Castle snatched up a loose stone and hurled it at him. He dodged and laughed. She groped wildly for another missile while he sprang forward and leaned over Barrington's prostrate figure, his arm raised for the blow.

"Stop! Stop! Or I'll blow the top of your head off." She turned with a sob of relief toward the little lawyer who stood shotgun in hand. His voice had a strange ring to it and, as he ended his sharp command, he brought the weapon to his shoulder with the swing of the practised shot. The Jew hesitated, then tossed his knife to one side, holding his hands high.

Quigley chuckled quietly.

"Just in time, Miss Castle," he said. "I wish I had a daughter, or a son, as plucky as you are. There is a pistol in my back pocket. Will you take it out and cover Mr. Jim Judevine, in case he comes back to life in a hurry."

He came toward her and she got the weapon from his pocket.

"There is a safety catch on it," he said. "Slip it back. That's it. Now, Miss Castle, if he get's nasty, bore a hole in him without compunction. Turn round, you!"

The Jew sullenly turned his back and Quigley accelerated his progress toward a tree with the muzzle of his gun.

"If you move your nose from that bark," said the lawyer, "I'll riddle you."

He came back to where Jane kneeled beside Barrington, the pistol in her hand, warily watching the unconscious Judevine. He turned Barrington over and wiped the blood from his features with a handkerchief. From a second hip-pocket he drew out a leather-covered flask and unscrewed the silver top, pouring some of the contents into the container that had covered the glass.

"Some of your excellent sherry, Miss Castle," he said. "Your aunt insisted upon my taking it for the trip. Now it will come in handy."

He spoke in such a matter-of-fact way, as if he had been dealing a hand at bridge, that Jane found herself relieved subconsciously from the hysteria against which she had been fighting. She took Barrington's head upon her lap while the lawyer poured some of the liquor between his lips. He responded almost instantly with opening eyes that saw clearly the face of Jane bending over him.

"I have my eye on you, Mr. Abrams," said Quigley, and the little Jew, who had been wriggling uneasily, voiced a protest—

"There is ants, I'm telling you, and they bite."

"Let 'em," said Quigley. "Take your choice between ants and buckshot."

The Jew subsided with an "Oy, yoy!" of despair and Jane's hysteria vanished in a peal of laughter. Barrington sat up. His head ached furiously but he got to his feet declaring himself fit again.

Judevine groaned and flung out an arm.

"Give me the pistol, Jane," said Barrington. "I'll handle this chap. Now then Judevine, no shamming. Get on your feet."

It was growing rapidly darker. The sun had dropped behind the ridge above them and only the reflection in the eastern sky threw their figures into relief among the shadows of the trees.

Judevine got sullenly up.

"Now, my man," said Quigley. "I haven't got the evidence complete against you yet or I'd have brought some one back with me who would take charge of you from now on. But I've got your record. The man is a stool-pigeon," he went on,

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addressing the girl and Barrington, "who is not over popular even with the police he spies for. He is booked at the Central Office as 'Jim, the Snitcher.' His Hebraic friend is a notorious fence known by the euphonious and well-named sobriquet of 'Nosey Abrams.' Both of you are trespassers and liable to arrest," he said sternly. "Clear off these premises and keep clear of them in future."

"Arrest nothing!" said Judevine, at bay before the menace of the automatic in Barrington's hand. "Do you think that you can get rid of me by a cheap trick like that to do me out of my share of the treasure? I can get the law on my side for that, you cheap courtroom spieler."

"You have no more right to a share of that treasure than you have a right to be in these woods," said Quigley.

"Why not?" Judevine's voice faltered and his cocksureness seemed shaken.

"Because, although you are the son of James Judevine, long ago convicted of felony and put away where he belongs, as you do, in State's prison, no blood of George Marvin runs in your veins. Mary Griffen was unfortunate enough to marry your criminal father but you are only her stepson."

CHAPTER IX

MAN-TRAPS AND SPRING-GUNS

BARRINGTON went to his own bungalow to make repairs and returned in time for the seven o'clock dinner with only a few strips of adhesive plaster and an inflamed eye as the visible signs of his encounter with Judevine.

A cold bath and a change of clothes had refreshed him wonderfully, though the real cause of his vigor lay deeper. He had fought before Jane to wipe out an insult offered to her and he had downed his man. To him, over-sensitive through the years of his delicacy on the question of matching his muscles against another, this triumph assumed abnormal proportions. It was a victory that leavened the soul of him with a newly acquired confidence in his own abilities, mental as well as physical, and made him feel a different man.

Jane saw him coming up the lawn from the brook and slipped out of the house to meet him.

"I am very proud and grateful, John," she said. The words were few but the look that accompanied them was eloquent.

"It was really Quigley who saved the day," he said. "I was all but done for when I heard your warning call. And the best I could do then was to collapse."

She shuddered.

"I saw that horrible little Jew stealing down on you with his knife," she said. "It was terrible. I threw a stone at him but missed, of course, being a girl. I wish—" She checked herself. "I don't think I want to be a boy any more, John, if you'd rather not. It is fine to be a woman and have a man fight for you the way you did for me."

Barrington looked at her. There was surrender in the droop of her head, like a flower on its stem. The bugaboo of the treasure rose up before him, yet it seemed that if he did not speak she would misunderstand.

Amanda saved the moment. Rustling out in starched gingham with her white apron spread like a sail, she addressed her master with the familiarity of an old servant.

"Fo' de land's sake, Massa John!" she exclaimed. "Heah I done got young chicken on de spider jes' spilin' to be eat up an' you——"

She stopped, the woman in her intuitively sensing the situation. She turned her broad back on them and fled, her ample shoulders shaking as she muttered her favorite expletive, "fo' de land's sake!"

They both laughed, John relievedly, Jane with a touch of vexation in her merriment, and went into the house together.

At dinner Quigley explained his opportune arrival.

"As soon as I had established the fact that Judevine was a false claimant," he said, "I realized that it would be impossible for us to search all day and watch most of the night. So I bought this cheap shotgun with some odds and ends of wire and staples to fix up an effective watch-dog. I got a ride from the station in a motor-car and when I found that you had not yet come back from the hill I brought the gun along to explain what I intended to do with it—and arrived at the opportune moment."

"It is all too dreadful," said Miss Griswold. "My nerves are shattered. You must not go to New York again, Mr. Quigley, if you value my peace of mind."

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"I do, indeed, my dear lady," replied the lawyer, "and I do not think it will be necessary for me to return there."

"That is a relief," said the spinster. "And we are well rid of the rogues at last."

"I sincerely hope so," said Barrington. He did not look at Quigley as he spoke, feeling certain that the lawyer echoed his own conviction that they had not seen the last of Judevine.

There was no whist that night. Both Miss Griswold and her niece retired early and the two men walked over to Barrington's bungalow for a convenient place to work on Quigley's contraption that he called a "watch-dog."

"It is very faithful and effective," said the lawyer. "It was long used in English country places to offset the raids of poachers or other marauders. Its use is not countenanced by any humane organization, but you are within your rights in using it coupled with warning signs. 'MAN-TRAPS AND SPRING-GUNS! BEWARE!' is the usual phrasing. We might back it up with a few animal traps if it was not for the danger to Saratof."

The wolfhound got up at the mention of his name and came and stood against Quigley, leaning his weight upon him affectionately before he nibbled his master's hand and lay down again.

It amused Barrington to hear the lawyer with his precise ways and general atmosphere of law and order detailing suggestions as to catching men and showing palpable zest in the undertaking. He explained the principle of the watch-dog to Barrington and they had it finished within the hour.

The barrels of the shotgun were sawed off to within a foot of the hammers, the stock was chiseled away to suit their purpose and the weapon mounted upon a heavy block of wood, resting upon a grooved disk arranged to turn as a swivel in any direction and fire both barrels upon the pull of a wire. Staples were fastened in the four corners of the block through which long wires were to lead, hidden in the ferns and brush. Any one tripping over one of them would be practically certain to receive the double charge.

"What do you load with?" asked Barrington.

"Anything from salt to buckshot. Slugs sometimes."

"I would suggest a compromise. What is the gage? Twelve, isn't it? Then these snipe and plover cartridges should do the trick."

They bore the contrivance to the woods and set it up as close to the spot marked on the chart by Quigley as was feasible for the free working of the wires. Saratof they left at home for safety and retreated themselves with all due caution outside of the lines of danger.

"It is too late to make a sign," said Barrington, "or rather for one to do any good. And we should turn in early. I'm pretty well tired out myself."

"Miss Castle told me it was a splendid fight," said Quigley. "I should have liked to have seen it. I should rather have liked to have been in it, but I am afraid Judevine would have been too heavy for me although I am rather a dab at the gloves for a lightweight."

The lawyer was showing a sporting side to his character that his quiet demeanor belied, and Barrington warmed to him.

"Jane is a wonderful girl," he said.

Quigley accepted the tone of the confidence.

"Yes, indeed, sir," he assented cordially. "And her aunt is a remarkably fine woman. Remarkably fine. A patrician, sir, if there ever was one." And they walked on together in mutual understanding.

"What do you think of the chance of finding the treasure?" Barrington asked.

"Candidly, I think it is a slim one. That there was a treasure, I believe absolutely. Where it is now is a different matter. The woods and the map fail to correspond and you seem to me to have rooted out a great many likely looking stones without success. Moreover, there is always the risk that some one has dug it up long ago."

"There are lots more stones left," said Barrington ruefully. "That little Jew spoke of 'soup,' Quigley. I really think it would be a good idea to try a little blasting. I can get some sticks of dynamite in the village. They use it for plowing hard soils and getting out stumps. I'll get some in the morning. It will be a blow to Jane if the thing turns out to be a hoax."

"Even that might have its compensations," said Quigley, and Barrington knew that the lawyer's shrewdness had not only guessed at his own scruples regarding Jane as an heiress, but respected them.

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"I could not find positive proof in New York that Judevine had been there of late," said the lawyer, "but my men are on the track. He'll have a warm reception if he goes back there. The police are after him for what they term a 'double cross.' Judevine informed on some of his associates and got the reward for his treachery and then gave the criminals warning. He is naturally vicious, without conscience or remorse, the type of man who sticks at nothing."

"The Jew is another," said Barrington. "He evidently financed this expedition of Judevine's for a share of the treasure, a big share too, I fancy. He's as keen after it as Judevine himself.

"By the way, I shall sleep at the bungalow tonight. I have an idea that Judevine may attempt reprisal. I'll leave Amanda and take Saratof."

THEY met again at breakfast, without Miss Griswold, who was catching up on lost sleep and who appeared to have relegated her duties as chaperon to the background now that Quigley had arrived, apparently considering the mature age and judgment of the solicitor a sufficient safeguard against any youthful indiscretions that her niece might indulge in.

Nothing had occurred overnight at the bungalow, Barrington told them. But Jane declared that she had heard a gun go off in the middle of the night.

"Though I dream perpetually of pirates, pikes and pistols these nights," she said.

The two men exchanged glances.

"The watch-dog barked," said Barrington.

The three made their way expeditiously but cautiously to where the spring gun had been set, Saratof on a leash for protection in case the weapon had not been discharged. Jane was right. Both barrels had been fired. One of the wires was slack in its staple and torn loose from the tree to which it had been fastened.

Following up the wire they came across a clump of maidenhair fern sprinkled with blood. Saratof nosed out a dark pool of it beside a bed of flattened grass and ferns, where the wounded man seemed to have lain.

"They must have bandaged him up and carried him off," said Barrington. "I wonder how badly he was wounded. The charge is likely to have caught him almost anywhere as he fell."

"It nearly always gets them in the legs," said Quigley conservatively, looking over at Jane who had paled a little at the sight of the ominous puddle.

"It looks as if the curse still held," she said.

"It is protecting the rightful owners, at any rate," said Barrington. "I'll confess they have not got my sympathies. They came too close to getting away with me. I am going down to the village to get the dynamite. If you two will survey the hill for the best place to start work we'll soon clear up the stones if we have to turn the whole ridge into a quarry."

As Barrington came out of the store with his explosives a motor-car passed swiftly by. Judevine was on the front seat with the driver and, in the tonneau, beside a man Barrington recognized as the chauffeur who had twice brought Judevine to the house, was Nosey Abrams. They favored him with a scowl as they shot by in a cloud of dust.

The ex-chauffeur was leaning heavily against the cushions and Abrams, his face the color of putty, drawn with pain and twitching with every jolt of the machine. Barrington watched the progress of the car to where the highroad forked and it turned to the right.

That's not the road to New York, thought Barrington. That road runs to Lenox. There's a sanitarium half way. I'll wager that's where they are taking the wounded man. So we have not seen the last of them yet.

He had already made inquiries that revealed the renting by Abrams of a tumbledown cottage on the outskirts of the village and the buying for cash of plentiful supplies, including liquor. The rent had been paid in advance upon the insistence of the cautious New Englander who owned the place.

"They look like a bad lot to me," he told Barrington in the store, pocketing a sack of tobacco at the latter's expense, "but as long's their money's good 'taint up to me to look out fer their actions. The selectmen can handle that end of it, I calkelate."

Barrington returned to the hillside to find Jane and Quigley poring over a reconstructed map in which the features of the half still in the possession of Judevine had been filled.

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"I have made quite a habit of mental photography," said Quigley in answer to Barrington's expression of surprise. "I got the idea from Kipling's *Kim*. It is an amusing diversion and I have been quite successful at it, finding it on occasions extremely valuable. I took a good look at Judevine's section and I think I can safely warrant that this is a practically exact copy.

"You see," he went on, "we have assumed that the topography of the sketch lies in a straight plane from the entrance to the house. Captain Bradley does not say specifically that this is the case. You will notice that there is indicated a decided dip to the stone wall, apparently conforming to the slant of the ridge. Now we have found this dip while you were in the village. There are some pines, two of which may have been those of the sketch. What is more important, there is a white rock below them about twenty feet and close to it is an old stump. It has rotted too badly to determine what kind of wood it is, but it looks promising. Also the land is swampy in the vicinity though that is pretty generally the case with the whole slope."

"It looks as if we were on the right track at last," said Barrington. "Let's get at the rock, right away."

"We were showing great forbearance in waiting for you, sir, I think," chided Jane, laughingly. "It was all Mr. Quigley could do to prevent me digging the rock up with my fingers. What are you doing?"

"Capping a stick of dynamite, or rather, half a stick. We'll have to send Saratof home or he'll be getting in trouble. Go along, sir."

With a wistful look the dog obeyed.

The explosion split the quartz block in half and loosened the dirt all about it. They scraped away the soil that clung to the under side and found nothing.

They drew blank all day, laboring until dusk, and returned to dinner tired, disgusted, but still determined to persevere until the hillside was ravaged of rocks that might bear graven crosses, regardless of the timber, which at this late stage was only confusing. At the table Barrington told them of the speeding automobile.

"I'm going to ring up that sanitarium," he said. "Judevine lied about hiring that machine. The driver was one of their gang. That makes four of them."

He got the connection and made his inquiry.

"I want to find out the condition of a man brought to your sanitarium this afternoon," he said. "A case of accidental gunshot."

He listened for a minute, then hung up.

"He's there," he announced. "Muscles and calves of both legs lacerated. No danger except from blood-poisoning. That makes it three with only five hands between them. So far all the score is on our side, if they don't get any re-enforcements."

"I think your suggestion about re-enforcements a likely thing to happen," said Quigley later as the two men smoked their cigars on the lawn after the ladies had excused themselves for the night. "Judevine could easily recruit a crowd of cutthroats in New York at the whisper of buried treasure. I understand you can get a man killed there for fifty dollars at an hour's notice."

"Such a crowd would be more than likely to turn on Judevine if they are not more successful than we have been," replied Barrington. "He won't be popular if he hires them on shares, and can't come through with a dividend. Let's go and set our spring-gun."

CHAPTER X

THE COTTAGE AT CHESTER

FOR ten days they worked, until the hands of Jane were blistered with her endeavors to discover anything that looked like a graven cross and those of Barrington and Quigley calloused like farm-hands. All three complained of creaking vertebræ, to which Jane added a broken heart.

"Not that I am altogether sordid, John," she said, "but I had planned so many things. And you don't even look sympathetic."

"My interests are divided," said Barrington.

He had been growing bolder as day after day of fruitless search seemed to bring Jane closer to him in inverse ratio to the diminishing prospects of finding the hoard.

"Don't give up hope yet," he added. "We have one more strip to tackle."

"After which, if we draw blank, I am going to turn Captain Eldad Ramsden Bradley's portrait with its face toward the wall," said Jane. "He ought to be ashamed of himself."

So far they had not been subjected to any interference. They found occasional traces

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of Judevine and his companions in the shape of cigaret ends and burned matches, and the cottage on the boder of the village was still occupied. Apparently they had determined to take the lazier rôle of observers, and Barrington and Quigley discussed measures calculated to dispose of Judevine, Abrams and Company as soon as any indications of success should tempt them to any aggressive move. The lawyer had received several telephone messages from New York concerning them.

"As long as they don't bother us I suppose we need not bother them," he said. "We could have them arrested on the grounds of trespass but that would lead to notoriety. Things are rounding up nicely in New York. They are likely any day to find a witness who will, unless I am much mistaken, connect Judevine with the death of his stepmother. That will rid us of him most effectively. If we do find the treasure, I would suggest bringing some guards from New York. They could get here in five hours."

"If we can get them before mid-afternoon," corrected Barrington. "There is no train later than four o'clock from New York. Once the stuff is unearthed it will be impossible to avoid publicity. We have been pretty lucky so far. We are too far away from the village for casual observers to bother us, and Amanda has put the fear of fetish too deeply into the hearts of the maids for them to babble. She tells their fortunes and they are completely under her control."

What they had hoped would prove the last day of their toil and the ending of their suspense was protracted by the stubbornness of a deep-seated mass of rock that took the whole morning to break. It bore no cross, a disappointment that they stood almost apathetically. Their optimism had been reduced to a dogged determination to thoroughly investigate the ridge which already looked as if Titans had amused themselves by plucking up the boulders and chucking them haphazard among the undergrowth.

Much of the latter had died and withered in the hot weather that prevailed, leaving a series of fire-traps that offered a perpetual risk to the matches and cigaret-ends of the night prowlers. Every afternoon at the end of their work the spring-gun was set and loaded, but it was consistently avoided.

The afternoon was oppressively warm and, by mutual consent, they left the final stretch of the slope until the next day, loath at the last moment to deliberately face the acknowledgment of ultimate failure.

"The only thing that is buried there is Hope," said Jane. "By this time tomorrow we shall know if it can be resurrected. I wanted to arrange for a trip abroad for aunt. She has never been there, save in imagination and with her books, and it would have meant very much to her."

"You were going too?" asked Barrington.

"I hadn't planned any other arrangements," she said and turned her head to hide a faint blush.

"There are better things than money, Miss Castle," said Quigley. "And no one knows what the future may hold, even trips to Europe."

Suddenly Saratof, who had been unleashed by Barrington for the walk home, growled and bounded up the hill toward a thick growth of wild azaleas. Barrington whistled him back, but the dog, turning an apologetic flash of red tongue and white teeth toward him, leaped the first bushes and disappeared in the thicket.

"Judevine or, more likely, Abrams," said Barrington. "He knows the latter shot at him, I fancy. Only vindictiveness would make him disobey me like that but he thinks he is acting for our mutual protection."

He whistled again and again without result and at last climbed to the azaleas and forced a way through them to the top of the ridge. The ground dipped sharply before it mounted to the final crest of the hill and was densely covered with undergrowth and a plantation of birches, though the opposing slope was barren and terraced with outcrops of rock. There was neither sight nor sound of Saratof.

Quigley and Jane came up beside him and the three beat the hillside, calling and whistling in vain until it was dark.

"They couldn't have shot him," said Quigley. "We would have heard the gun."

"And he didn't even bark," said Jane. "Poor old Saratof, I wonder what has happened to him."

"He wouldn't bark," said Barrington. "Wolfhounds never do out of pack. They snarl and growl. It's some of Judevine's deviltry. I am afraid they came prepared for this and have smothered him under their weight with sacking and ropes. I'm going

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down to their cottage and I'll get the truth of the matter from them if I have to choke it out of them."

His jaw set grimly and his eyes flashed. Jane looked at him admiringly. Quigley voiced his approval of the plan.

"I'll go with you," he said.

"No," said Barrington. "It may be a trick to get us away and leave the ladies unprotected. They've seen by this that the quest is well-nigh hopeless and Abrams, at least, is not the kind to see his money wasted, aside from Judevine's views on getting even generally. You said they were the type who stick at nothing, Quigley. If they think there is no treasure forthcoming they might attempt to reimburse themselves by robbery. I'll send Amanda over to the bungalow and you look after Jane and her aunt."

Quigley nodded.

"It's the best thing to do. But it's pretty risky for you to deliberately put your head into their den."

"Saratof would risk anything for me," answered Barrington. "I'm not going to stand by when he may be killed or being tortured."

"You're right, John," said the girl. "I wish I could come with you but I'd only be in the way. I hope you'll find him."

AN EARLY moon was up by the time Barrington had saddled his mare and started for the village. The cottage rented by the men was a dilapidated two-story house on an abandoned farm, close by the banks of the same stream that flowed between the grounds of the bungalow and the Bradley Place.

Barrington had an automatic pistol and an electric torch with him and he rode swiftly, hot with wrath at the thought of Saratof in lonely misery or perhaps in death.

"If they've killed him I'll make those curs pay heavily for the death of a real dog," he told himself and urged the willing mare.

Caution prompted him to tie her to the hitching-rail outside the village Council Hall where a dance was being held and there was company for the horse. A quarter of a mile farther on he turned on foot abruptly to the left, passed over a bridge, vaulted a rail and walked swiftly through the uncultivated field by the edge of the stream, close to the alders that fringed the brook.

At a brokendown fence he waded into the water and made his way through a tunnel roofed by verdure, pierced occasionally by moonbeams that silvered the shallows. A bend in the brook brought water that swirled to his hips and then a high gravel bank to his left, deep in shadow.

The cottage was on the opposing bank, clapboarded in its two stories, the curling shingles exposing here and there the rafters, the bricks of the top of the chimney scattered over the roof. No smoke came from the flue and no lights shone through the small-paned windows. The ground about the place was rank with thistles and tall herbage.

Bent double, he swiftly forded the stream and made his way under the cover of the weeds to a tumbledown outhouse from which he surveyed the cottage, listening intently for voices or the welcome whine of the wolfhound. The only sound was the quiet rush of the stream and a creaking noise that seemed to come from a rusty hinge on a swinging door.

Pistol in hand, he turned his attention to the back of the house. A lean-to reached to the second floor. Crouching in the fringe of the weeds, he saw something move at one of the upper windows facing him. The shutter had broken loose from its rusted fastening and swayed back and forth with the breeze, making the noise he had heard from the front. As it swung forward he caught sight of something that made him give a sigh of heartfelt relief—the long, slender profile of Saratof, looking wistfully through the window. The dog saw him at the same moment and thrust at the frame. A paw broke through the glass and he withdrew it with a whine.

"Good boy, Saratof, I'm coming," whispered Barrington, fearful that the wolfhound might get seriously cut with the glass.

Doors and windows were tightly fastened and he freed a plank from the outhouse and mounted to the roof of the lean-to. As he stood there for a second on the slanting surface he heard the *chug-chug* of a car from the road beyond the brook. He hauled up the plank and smashed in the panes, passing through the opening to the floor. Saratof had shrunk back at his gesture to be out of the way of the falling glass but now he leaped upon him with a joyful whimper and the rattle of a chain.

The rusty links had been tied clumsily about his neck in the lack of a collar and

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the other end was fastened to a stout staple driven deeply in the floor. A pan of water and some bones showed that some one among the thieves loved a dog.

"I'll almost forgive him for that," muttered Barrington, working at the tangled links drawn tight by Saratof's efforts for freedom. "It wasn't Judevine or the Jew that fed him, I'll be bound."

He was mistaken there though he never knew it. Nosey Abrams knew a good dog, and it was avarice not mercy that had spared Saratof's valuable life and given him food. A champion of champions, he represented the one great extravagance of Barrington's none too large income.

The motor-car was coming nearer. Barrington could neither undo the chain about the dog's neck nor ease it past his skull. He looked about for something to force the staple. The room was bare and he hurried to the front of the house. Through the blank windows he saw the lights of the car that had turned in from the main road to the lane that served the house. Within a very few minutes it would arrive at the door.

The room he was in ran the length of the house. He was afraid to show the flash of his torch and the moonlight was on the other side of the building. He made out two beds roughly shaped on the floor, a table with a lantern, two bottles and some glasses.

He opened one door that led into a shallow closet which was empty then tried another that led down partitioned stairs with a latched door at the bottom. Down these he hastened.

The door opened into the main room of the house, opposite the front entrance. A table was littered with cards and the remnants of a meal. Bottles stood about on the floor and one rolled as he kicked it.

He saw a stove in the gloom. On top of it were a stove lifter and a stout iron poker, its end bending at right angles. These he seized and sprang up-stairs again. The car was rumbling over the loose planks of the near-by bridge.

Barrington wrenched fiercely at the staple, Saratof standing by his side quietly but trembling with excitement. The poker bent. The dog growled and Barrington hushed him with his hand on the hound's muzzle as a key turned in the front door.

Saratof couched obediently and Barrington returned to his attack on the staple. At last it came free. He stepped quietly to the window over the creaky boards and set his foot on the edge of the pan of water. At the same moment Saratof, putting his paws on the wrecked frame of the window, dragged the chain across the floor. The sound of voices rose instantly and he heard steps hastily mounting the stairs.

He climbed over the sill to the lean-to roof, Saratof with him. It was eight feet above the ground and Saratof, cumbered with the chain, hesitated at the leap. There was no time to replace the plank.

The door of the room they had left opened and some one blundered heavily across the floor to the window. A man ran round the corner of the house and fired at the figure of Barrington standing on the roof in the moonlight. A shot came simultaneously from the window.

Barrington whirled and fired. One of his recreations was pistol practise and the bullet went true to the target behind the flash.

The man dropped with a thud and a groan across the sill, half in and half-out of the window as Barrington exchanged shots with the man below.

Urging Saratof, he ran to the side of the lean-to, sat for a moment on the edge of the roof and, as the wolfhound leaped, half slid, half jumped to the ground himself and bent to secure the chain. A figure came out of the weeds, a gun flashing in his hand. Before the weapon came to the level the dog had leaped, tearing the links from Barrington's fingers. The man went down with a shriek under the weight of the hound.

Two more bullets whistled by Barrington's head as he called sternly to Saratof and, seeing him reluctantly obey, raced with him across the open to the stream. The shadow of the bank helped them as they gained the water but the white fur of the dog was a plain mark and the missiles splashed in the water all about them, while men shouted, cursing as they pursued.

Barrington and Saratof plunged through the water and the tunnel of the trees received them. The men entered the water but hesitated to follow into the dark vista of foliage and water and Barrington discouraged them further by a volley from the blackness. Realizing that they were targeted against the light at the end of the tunnel the men halted. Judevine retreated to the bank as the little Jew came screaming

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down to the stream, one hand to his throat.

"Aftder them!" he yelled. "They've done for White and the —— dog nearly ripped oudt my throat!"

"Go after them yourself," said Judevine surlily. There was a heated discussion and Barrington moved cautiously to the bank closer to the road. The water deepened and he eased the weight of the chain for Saratof to swim beside him. A gully opened between the alders where a now dry streamlet augmented the brook in Spring. Up this they crept swiftly to the road, covered completely by the grass.

Once on the highway Barrington breathed more easily. He had left his mark on at least one of them and Saratof had revenged himself upon the Jew. He wondered if the man called White had been killed, and even wondered a little at his apparent lack of compunction. His blood was heated for action, not thought, and his resentment was at its height.

Leading Saratof he hastened toward the village. The music had drowned any possibility of the shots having been heard and there was no one in sight. As they came out of the shadow of the road-bordering trees in front of the Council House he noticed that Saratof was limping badly. He stooped to examine his foot and found that it had been gashed by the glass of the window. It was a deep cut, though no tendons had been severed, but Saratof was losing blood freely.

Barrington made a *tourniquet* with a strip of his handkerchief and a stick from the roadside, bound the wound in the remnant of the linen and picked the heavy dog up in his arms. He carried him to a strip of turf close to the hitching-rail, bade him lie still and entered the Council House. There he found a farmer who had been persuaded with difficulty to accompany his wife to the dance and who was only too glad to give the use of his buggy to bear Saratof. While the man explained matters to his wife, Barrington telephoned the Bradley place. Jane came to the telephone overjoyed at the news of Saratof's recovery.

"You are to bring him straight here," she said. "I'll tell Amanda to have a place ready for him. And hurry, hurry!"

Saratof was soon comfortably ensconced with Amanda in attendance on her "lamb." Everything that Amanda cared for she called "her lamb" regardless of skin or fur or feather and Saratof assumed quite the conscious air of a hero as Barrington related the night's adventure, feeling somewhat of the joy of heroism himself as Jane gazed at him with softly glowing eyes.

CHAPTER XI

JUDEVINE LEAVES A CARD

WHEN Barrington went over to his bungalow the next morning to get some medicine for Saratof's injured foot, he found a card attached to his front door by a tack that had been thrust through the central design of an ace of spades. There were some words scribbled across the card that he read and then put the missive away in his pocket.

He secured the salve he had come for, got two connections on his telephone and returned to the Bradley Mansion in time for the early breakfast. It was not yet served and he took the spare time to attend to the wolfhound. Saratof was comfortable on a circular rag carpet in the room that Jane called her "cave," surrounded by dishes containing special offerings to his convalescence, all of which he had disdained in favor of a marrow-bone that he had polished as white and gleaming as his own teeth.

"You are *hors de combat* for the time, old chap," said Barrington, "but you've done your share and you've evened matters with the man who shot at you. I'm sorry you are going to be out of it and yet I'm glad, for you are a shining mark for a bullet and it looks to me as if we were going to have more trouble on our hands before long."

Jane came in while he was talking to the dog and Saratof nibbled at her caressing hand.

"Are you ready for the final hunt?" she asked. "Amanda is ready to serve breakfast. She says that she sat up last night to read the cards and she declares we are going to find the treasure after all. 'Don' you fret, li'l lamb,' she said. 'Things is shuah coming yo' way, honey bright.' "

Barrington laughed at the girl's sprightly imitation of Amanda's dialect.

"I don't believe in cards overmuch myself," he said. "I found one this morning. A visiting-card from our friend Judevine."

"Yes?"

He did not produce it until they met

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Quigley in the hall when he took it from his pocket and showed it to them with a laugh.

"It's hard to tell just when it was put there," he said. "It might have been after last night's affair, but I doubt it. At all events it is harmless. I telephoned the village. Judevine and his crowd left last night. Henderson, the storekeeper, went out there late to deliver a special order and collect for it and found them ready to leave. The man is still at the sanitarium. They asked me if I was a friend of his and would be responsible for the bill. It seems that Judevine and Abrams have not been near the place since they left him there with a week paid in advance."

He had spoken without noticing Jane's face. It had suddenly blanched and her lips were white and dry.

"What is it?" he asked. "That doesn't mean anything. They've cleared out. It is only the last taunt of a retreating coward."

Jane read aloud the words on the card.

You needn't think you are going to get away with this. I'm going to show you what hell looks like before I send you there. J. J.

"I don't like it," she said. "I'm foolish, I suppose, but I don't like it, John. I don't believe we've seen the last of them. And, if anything happens, it will be because of me."

"Why that's nonsense, Jane," he said gently.

She tried to smile.

"I know it is," she said, "but——"

She set a hand against the wall for support and the card fell to the floor. Amanda, coming down the hall with a tray, put it down hastily and hastened toward Jane but stopped short of the card as if it had been a coiled snake. It had fallen face upward and the face of the negress changed from glossy black to gray.

"The death cya'd!" she cried. "How come that in the house? Who's bin frightenin' my lamb? There, honey, de signs am bad but there's good luck in the cya'ds fo' you. Didn' 'Manda see it last night? I shuffled 'em seben times fo' de truf."

"I'm all right," said the girl with spirit. "Put that thing in the stove, Amanda."

"Not me, honey. I wouldn' raise it from de flo' fo' a king's crown."

"I will," said Quigley. "I'll keep this if you don't mind, Barrington. It may come in handy as a curb for Judevine if anything develops later."

"I don't want it," said Barrington. "I'm sorry I brought the thing along," he said repentantly to Jane.

"I'm glad you did," she answered. "I want you to treat me as a pal. Let's get breakfast and finish up our hillside."

It did not take them long. Before noon they stood in front of the last rock that appeared to have any remote connection with the map and Jane laughed while Barrington and Quigley wiped the perspiration from their faces.

"So that's the end of it," she said bravely. "And I'm glad. I really believe the idea of being a wealthy woman was changing me, and not for the better. I was perfectly happy before and now I can start in being so all over again. Let's shake hands on it."

They mingled fifteen regretful fingers across the shattered rock.

"There's nothing like facing misfortune with a smile," said Quigley. "I've told you before, Miss Castle, how I admire your pluck. Phew, but it's warm! There is an American invention that I am going to introduce into England. It consists of long glasses, a slice of lemon, sugar, ice and tea. Could we have some of it when we get back?"

"To drown the memory of our bad luck in? Certainly," laughed the girl.

AS THEY started homeward they noticed a blue haze creeping through the trees. The air was motionless but it held the sting of wood smoke.

"There's a fire somewhere," said Barrington with a frown. "It's not far off, either. Listen."

They heard distinctly the crackling of burning branches and hurried to the lip of the little hollow in which they had been working. Below them the hill was on fire. Flickering red tongues of flame were creeping in two lines that extended far to either side of them. Even as they gazed the flames leaped instead of creeping and the gap closed. A clump of birches burst into sudden flame with explosions of the sap that sent red flakes whirling into the dried ferns and a low front of fire raced toward them, licking hungrily at the tree-trunks. The increasing heat forced a draft and

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puffs of hot wind began to dry their lungs.

"Up the hill!" cried Barrington. "We're cut off from the house!"

They scrambled up through the brush, pursued by the rapidly mounting fire, spurred by its increasing roar and heat. At the crest they stood aghast. The downslope was ablaze to right and left, the flames devouring the birches as if they had been standing grain. A space of less than a hundred yards, lessening before their eyes, was immune, and already brands were flying into the heart of this avenue of escape in advance of the main conflagration. Beyond lay safety on the barren, final ridge.

"It's the only chance," said Barrington.

"Come on."

Panting in the heat, they began to run the gantlet of flame. Twenty feet from the ridge Jane stumbled and fell prone. She rose nimbly to her feet before Barrington could reach her but her face was twisted with pain as she tried to advance.

"I've wrenched my ankle, John," she said simply. "It's no use. I can't go on."

"I can," he answered. "Give me your wrists, Quigley."

The two men intelocked wrists and hands and made a seat for the girl who rode between them, one arm about either's neck. The uneven height of the two made the going slow and difficult through the tangled growth and thick-set trees. The fire was closing in relentlessly. A smoldering fragment of birch-bark dropped on Jane's linen gown and she smothered it with her palms. Suddenly the way was barred by saplings growing too thickly for them to pass.

"Go ahead, Quigley," said Barrington.

Thankful of his strength, he swung the girl up in his arms and strode on between the trunks, some of which were already scorched and between which the smoke was drifting fast. The lawyer kept even with them, disdaining to mend his pace.

"Better go ahead, old chap," panted Barrington with choking lungs. "This smoke is blinding. You may guide us out."

His clothes were smoking. He began to feel the quick sear of his flesh as the cloth caught fire in places from the drifting sparks. His eyes burned and watered with the smoke until the sight seemed scalded from them. Ahead he could see nothing. Quigley had crashed on ahead and he could no longer hear him above the snap of the burning trees and the furnace that raged closer and closer.

"Put your head under my coat," he gasped and found fresh strength as Jane obediently snuggled beneath the lapels of his riding jacket.

The slant of the hill gave him direction and he struggled on, his chest laboring for the breath that seemed to poison him, his throat raw from the smoke through which lurid glows began to appear ominously near. A brand fell on the back of his neck, burning the flesh and scorching his hair and soft cap. His strength began to fail him rapidly. Without air the whole machinery of his body was on the point of collapse.

He looked desperately down at Jane and thanked God that she had fainted. It seemed the end.

His tortured feet splashed into a bog. He set the girl down and swiftly drenched her unconscious figure with water splashed from a pool. He soaked his handkerchief and laid it over her face, covering it with his sodden cap before he painfully raised her again, scooping up a mouthful at the last to relieve his own mouth and nostrils. A wave of heat rose behind him and seemed to curl above his head. The air sucked at him and he reeled, almost overwhelmed.

A shout called him back from the oblivion into which he was fast sinking.

"This way! This way!"

A form rushed out of the swirling smoke and plucked at his arm.

"This way, Barrington! There is a pool just ahead!"

Blind, guided by Quigley, he tottered forward with his burden. Merciful water laved his ankles, rose to his knees, his waist. The air cooled and grew clearer. He staggered on through some sedges and over springy turf to a stony slope, the lawyer's arm about him, supporting him.

He began to see again. The gully between the second ridge and the final lift of the hill was a morass that centered in the pool that had saved them. The last slope, gracious in its barrenness, was ahead. Barrington made a final effort across an outcrop of stone, put down the girl gently and pitched forward beside her.

When he came to, Quigley was bending over him, the veritable scarecrow of a man, his sedate black clothes patched brown with fire and rent with branches, his face

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smudged like a charcoal-burner's and red streaks showed across his bald pate.

"Ah!" he cried. "Good work, Barrington."

"Jane?"

"I'm all right," said a faint voice.

Barrington twisted his neck painfully and saw her sitting against a ledge close beside him, wofully besmirched but safe.

"Thank God!" he said for the second time.

She reached out her hand and touched him.

"Dear John," she said. "Dear, brave John."

Beneath and opposite them the fire raged through the woods in a mounting pyramid of fire and smoke. On either side the conflagration had already consumed the hill. Blackened trunks showed through the thinning smoke and now and then one tottered and fell.

They watched it for a while, shaken by their experience and gradually recovering their poise.

"That was no accident," said Quigley. "The fire started both sides of the hill in at least four places at once. It was a deliberate attempt to cut us off."

"Judevine making good his boast to give us a glimpse of hell," said Barrington with a wry motion of his swollen lips. "We've got to get out of this and look after our burns. Are you badly hurt, Jane?"

"Only a little on my hands," she answered, casually hiding her palms. "I'm worrying about aunt and the house."

"They are all safe, I think," said Barrington. "The fire started above it and the lawn would protect it even if there had been a wind. But of course she will be anxious. We can get back over the shoulder of the hill, can't we?"

"Yes. There is an old wood road. But I'm afraid I can't walk."

"I'll go ahead and get a carriage for you," said Barrington.

But Quigley insisted on doing this and, after they had once more made a chair of their wrists and carried the girl to the border of the old road the lawyer left them and walked on with a genuine twinkle in his eye and a smile on his lips. They watched him out of sight.

"Do you suppose they deliberately tried to burn us, John?" she asked.

Barrington looked grim.

"I wouldn't put it beyond them," he said. "Coupled with that card Judevine sent me. Partly for revenge and perhaps because they thought it would help to wipe out the last chance of locating the place where the treasure was buried. It will be a hard matter to prove, despite the Ace of Spades. No doubt they have made good their escape after they fired the woods."

The girl sat silent for a little while.

"You saved my life, John," she said presently. "Just words seem idle for thanks."

"Why of course I saved it," he said simply. "Let me see your hand."

He had noticed her face twitch as she changed position. She reluctantly surrendered her fingers and he exclaimed with pity as he saw the white blisters that almost filled her palm.

"I hope Quigley hurries," he said anxiously. "We must get that treated."

"You haven't come through the fiery furnace altogether unscathed," she said. "And the poor hill. There were orchids there among the ferns where we searched for the rubies and the gold. Do you suppose there ever was a treasure buried there?"

"Quigley thinks so. So do I. It couldn't have been a deliberate hoax. Quigley thinks some one may have found it long ago, by chance, perhaps."

"Perhaps."

She lapsed once more into silence, looking at him covertly through her lashes, attempting to make up her mind how best to open the conversation she wished to promulgate.

"John," she said at last. "Be perfectly frank with me. Do you think that the thought of all this money has spoiled me?"

"Why no. Of course not. Why do you ask?"

"Because there is something wrong somewhere. You're not the same. I've offended you, I think."

He laughed and shook his head.

"But there is something," she persisted. "Tell me. You have different ways of looking at me lately, and sometimes you have looked at me almost as if I were a stranger to you."

It was Barrington's turn to be silent.

"Tell me—please," she pleaded.

"There is something," he said finally. "Nothing in you, nothing that you have done. It was the treasure. There is a

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wide difference between an heiress and a man who only thinks he has a profession and has never really proved up."

"John!" The word was an accusation. "Not proved up? Why you have been wonderful. You've been shot at for me and you've braved death in the fire to save me. I'm ashamed of you, sir. As for the treasure, I never thought of it as belonging just to me. It seemed as if we all owned a share in it."

"But it did, you know."

"I see now. And you worked so generously to establish the difference you talk of. I'm humiliated for my utter selfishness. You must have thought bitter things of me. Mr. Quigley too must have thought me an avaricious little beast all the time he was helping."

"Quigley, I imagine, did his share for much the same motives as I did."

Jane made no quibble of evasion.

"You mean Aunt Abigail?"

He nodded.

Her eyes grew tender as she surveyed his burned clothes and scorched face and hands. His eyebrows were singed. So was his hair above the angry mark on his neck where the brand had struck him. He was not a romantic figure at that moment but her face glowed as she appraised his honorable wounds. The rose color mounted in her cheeks and a little smile crept to her lips.

"But the treasure can not lie between us now," she said softly.

He turned on her with such a look of hungry adoration that her lashes fell and she gave a little gasp at the revelation.

She saw his lax hands change to balled fists that whitened at the knuckles.

"When I can come to you with hands that are measurably full," he said slowly; "when I can see that I am on the road to something really worth while, when I cease to be an idler, Jane, I may ask you to share my success, be it great or small."

She leaned toward him.

"If you insist upon me waiting," she said, "how long is it going to take?"

They both caught the sound of a carriage coming up the hill. The next second Quigley appeared round the bend of the road. He affected an intense interest in the landscape until he reined up the antiquated nag that Miss Griswold fondly imagined to be a cross between Pegasus and a courser bred in the stables of Phaeton.

"The house is safe," he said. "I found them all on the lawn, your aunt, Amanda and the two maids. I was welcomed as one returning from the dead though I did not tell them how close we had been to not coming back. From their preparations I imagine the house will look like a hospital when we arrive."

It did. Amanda presided over a formidable array of oils and distillations, liniment, salve and white flour, while the maids under Miss Griswold's directions folded bandages and pulled lint enough for a whole company of wounded soldiers. At last they were swathed and anointed to her satisfaction and Amanda brought in a silver pitcher of iced tea. On the tray was a teapot hot with the freshly steeped liquid.

"Why the hot tea, Amanda?" asked Jane, reclining easily in a *chaise longue*, her wrenched ankle comfortably resting on a cushion.

"You-all is gwine to drink it, Missy Jane, an' den—'Manda's gwine read yo' fo'tune in the leaves."

"Fortune, Amanda? Didn't you know that we can't find it?"

"Dat don' mean it's lost, honey, jes 'cause you can't find it. You gwine find dat. You let 'Manda see fo' shuah. Don' t'row out de leaves."

"All right," said the girl, and Amanda went out contented.

"Amanda has a great idea of her powers of divination," said John. "I nearly broke her heart once because the cards told her I was going to be thrown from a horse and killed and I went on riding just the same."

"She's an old dear," said Jane, "and if it amuses her it amuses me."

She drank the hot unstrained tea and set aside the cup. When Amanda came back again Jane obediently twisted her sideways-held cup and the negress inspected the leaves that clung to the sides with an air of prodigious gravity.

"There it is!" she cried at last. "Money! What did I tell you - all, Missy Jane? Money and a marriage. Money comin' to you through a skull! An' heah's a picture with money in the frame. Fo' de land's sake! Look at it fo' yourse'f, chile, it's plain as de comb on a rooster."

A fervid imagination might have perceived the semblance of a frame in the twigs that were grouped in a rough square with a speck or two in the center that Amanda

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translated into money. Jane looked sufficiently impressed and the negress left triumphant, her head held high, muttering to herself.

"I am afraid Amanda mixes actual knowledge with her prophecy," said Jane. "In which she is a true sybil. The skull is on the flag we found, of course, and the picture is Captain Eldad who is now to be court-martialed and sentenced. I am going to turn him against the wall. I said I'd do it and I will, though I won't keep him there long."

She insisted upon sending a maid into the library for the portrait and removing a picture from the wall of the living-room opposite where she lay.

"Now, John," she said, "you shall be the marshal-at-arms, unless your hands are too badly burned."

Barrington disclaimed any but minor casualties on the back of his hands and turned the heavy frame, preparatory to carrying out Jane's whim. At some time the canvas had been removed from the molding and whoever had replaced it had pasted a square of parchment across the back to keep out the dust. The grease of the sheepskin had worked loose from the paste and a corner had rolled back, exposing the lines of a drawing.

"It looks like another map," said Barrington. "Shall I take it off?"

"Shall he take it off?" mimicked Jane. "Hurry, hurry, please."

The parchment peeled readily away and disclosed in faded ink the plan of an estate. He gave it into Jane's eager hands.

"Why it's this place," she cried as she examined it and read the inscription: "Edgebrook, Property of Mrs. Hiram Addams."

"She was my grandmother," said Jane. "But I never knew the place was called Edgebrook before. Perhaps she changed the name after she sold off part of the property. See, here is the brook and the road and the line fence taking in the piece you own now, John. The road has been changed. It didn't go round the house then. It followed the stream and—look! Here is the entrance, not where it is now but at the other end of the hall, at the back of the house where the big windows are! What does that mean?"

It was Quigley who phrased the thought that came to all of them simultaneously.

"It means, I think," he said, "that when your grandmother felt obliged to sell the property she did something that Captain Bradley could not have foreseen. In order to preserve her privacy she turned her back upon her new neighbor, closed the road as it then ran and swung it in a half circle round to her new entrance, turning the original door into those big French windows that open on the lawn.

"It means that the treasure may be still intact and comparatively easy to find, and it means also that, if it is anywhere, it is located upon the grounds of John Barrington."

CHAPTER XII

LAW AND EQUITY

THE discovery was as startling as the explanation was simple. The present entrance to the Bradley Mansion faced the east, lying, as did Barrington's bungalow, in a flat between the hills with the brook between them, acting as the line fence when the property was divided. A wide hallway divided the lower floor fairly in half, with doorways opening on either side and a curving staircase leading to the upper rooms.

At the opposite end from the door high French windows led by broad steps to the lawn that sloped gently to the stream. Front door and French windows occupied the same dimensions and the wide steps from each were of equal proportion, a significance easily overlooked in the Colonial builders' passion for balance.

It was readily conceivable that Eldad Bradley's daughter, finding herself soon after marriage obliged to turn some of her newly inherited acreage into cash, would not have relished a constant reminder of the clipping of her estate every time she opened her front door, and therefore transferred it, closing a portion of the private road, turning it into a lawn and bringing the drive in a wide sweep round to her new entrance.

The general house plan would have necessitated little alteration inside. The *porte-cochère* now in front might have been bodily changed, any signs of removal being well hidden at the back by the vines that now covered the wall. The solution was almost ludicrously simple yet it was the one thing

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that the old buccaneer would neither have conceived nor provided for, and only the accident of the frame would have brought it into the heads of the seekers.

"I apologize most humbly, great-granddad," said Jane, her eyes sparkling. "If I had two sound ankles I would grovel. You shall have a new frame, especially designed and carved and gilded with leaf beaten from your own treasure."

Barrington looked at her in a surprise that held a measure of pain. It was but an hour or two since she had apparently rejoiced because the barrier of the treasure was no longer between them, and now. . . .

"That is," went on the girl happily, "if John Barrington is not too stingy to give it to you. How about it, sir?"

"I have nothing to do with the disposition of the treasure," he said a trifle stiffly.

"You haven't? Why it's yours. It's on your land."

"Hardly that, I think," said Miss Griswold in a voice of almost indignant astonishment, raising her eyebrows at her niece. "The treasure was not sold with the land. Even then, Mr. Barrington was not the original possessor."

"He's the ultimate owner, anyway," said Jane. "And possession is nine points of the law. Isn't it, Mr. Quigley?"

"You must have taken leave of your senses, Jane," said her aunt anxiously. "I am sure Mr. Barrington——"

He concluded her sentence for her.

"Has no intention of making any such idle claim."

"Neither shall I claim it then," said Jane decisively, her lips firmly set.

"Mr. Quigley?" appealed her aunt.

The lawyer bowed to her, perhaps to cover the light in his eyes as he glanced from Jane to Barrington under cover of the salutation. As he straightened up his demeanor became suddenly judicial. The traveling suit of gray tweed for which he had exchanged his burned attire took on the investment of an ermine-tipped gown. Even his bald pate, smeared with unguents for the relief of the burns upon it, seemed hidden by a flowing wig of horsehair. His armchair assumed the dignity of a woolsack as he sat upright in it, gently imposing the tips of his fingers.

"It is a pretty question," he said. "A very pretty problem, that of treasure-trove. In England the crown takes a large proportion; in cases where the ownership is not vested in the finder and the trove is not found upon the surface or at sea, the crown takes the whole of it. In the United States that right has seldom or never been exercised by the States Government. The present issue might be cited under the laws of eminent *demesne*. The original conveyance by Mrs. Hiram Addams to the original purchaser is not at all likely to have provided for any such contingency. The conveyance to Mr. Barrington did not?"

He paused with an inquiring glance at Barrington who shook his head and the lawyer continued:

"Any mineral rights would certainly apply with the sale of the land and pass intact to the present owner, unless otherwise disposed of. You have, I take it, a clear title to the land, Barrington?"

The latter nodded moodily. He was beginning to see a new phase in the curse attached to the De Bossuet hoard.

"It would make a very interesting matter of litigation," went on Quigley. "Very interesting indeed. The question would doubtless become a *cause célèbre*, as establishing a precedent in this country, and be carried up to the highest courts through a term of years. It would also be apt to be expensive," he added with the hint of a smile.

"There could be no question of the hereditary rights of Miss Castle. On the other hand, Mr. Barrington might be adjudged wholly within his rights in preventing her from trespass upon his property. That would not necessarily prejudice the rights of Miss Castle nor give him the authority to uncover, appropriate or otherwise disturb the treasure."

Jane who had been listening with approval manifest upon her face, interrupted.

"That sounds logical," she said.

"Your phrases are Greek to me," protested Miss Griswold. "What do you suggest?"

"My dear lady, I hardly care to venture an opinion—as yet. Let me first quote the words of an eminent authority as a suggestion that seems highly pertinent. That authority is or was a world-famous cook who says 'First catch your hare.' "

Jane laughed and the tension was broken momentarily.

"You are right, Mr. Quigley," she said. "John, your hill is pretty much a replica

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of ours, as I remember from our rides across it. There are two ridges before you reach the crown of the hill. Are there any stone walls upon it?"

"There was one," he answered. "I demolished a part of it to get foundations for the bungalow."

"And there is a real stream that flows into the brook and comes from the spring where the mint grows. The treasure is there, I am sure of it," she went on enthusiastically. "Let's start the hunt the first thing in the morning. Are we invited, John?"

"Not on any such terms as those," he said shortly.

"Why, you are really angry about it! I shall not trespass, sir. If you do not care to 'uncover, appropriate or otherwise disturb' your own property—" she glanced merrily at the lawyer who was observing her shrewdly—"then it may stay there forever as far as I am concerned. I am serious, John. It isn't mine. Even Eldad Bradley warned us to try and secretly buy back the hillside if it had passed from our possession. He knew it would belong to any one who bought the land. And I refuse to even make you an offer for it. It would be stealing."

"Jane!" appealed her aunt almost distractedly. But her niece was still looking at Quigley as if to impress him with her opinions.

"This is sheer nonsense," said Barrington abruptly. "I refuse to consider it."

Quigley and the girl appeared to have come to some mutual understanding for she leaned back as if satisfied.

"Well then," she argued, "there is still another phase to it. Some of the property should certainly go to charity. Charity should not be done out of its share because we quarrel about the rest of it. Let us adjudicate the matter. There is no need to enter into a lawsuit when we have an advocate in the house. I am sure you will agree that Mr. Quigley is impartial?"

"Without doubt," assented Barrington reluctantly.

"Will you leave it to his decision, John?"

Barrington hesitated.

"Very well then," he said finally. "If he cares to make a decision I will abide by it. There can only be one answer according to natural law."

"You speak by the book, Barrington," said the solicitor. "According to the natural law, the giving or desiring to give each man his due is equity. Equity was formerly administered in England by the king's chancellor but, in both England and the United States, it has developed into a formal system of legal and procedural rules under which justice is administered within well-defined limits of jurisdiction. Law and equity now merge, in both my country and your own. The American Colonies generally adopted the principles and practise of the chancery court of England and, in this instance, I shall be your Lord Chancellor."

"You make my head ache," protested Jane, "but I am content, if John is. Otherwise I now vow and declare that I will throw the affair into chancery which, from all I have heard about it, will be equivalent to reburying the treasure and forgetting all about it. Charity must take its chance."

Barrington looked toward the lawyer. Apparently Quigley's face inspired him with confidence.

"Go ahead, Quigley," he said quietly. He made the decision with certain reservations, but Jane clapped her hands.

"Now then, my Lord Chancellor," she said, "proceed."

"My decree is simply arrived at," said Quigley. "Lord Selden wrote, 'Equity is a roguish thing, according to the conscience of him that is chancellor and, as that is larger or narrower, so is equity. 'Tis all one,' declared the famous jurist, 'as if they should make the standard for the measure a chancellor's foot. One chancellor has a long foot, another a short foot, a third an indifferent foot; 'tis the same thing in a chancellor's conscience.'

"My foot," went on Quigley, "is indifferent long, yet, with a clear conscience, taking full cognizance of all the circumstances, I have no fear of making my standard fit the particular shoe of this case. First, catch your hare together and, in the mutual discovery, establish a mutual claim. The property shall then be divided into equal thirds, for Charity, for Miss Castle and for Mr. Barrington."

He pronounced the decision with authority and rose, shedding his magisterial air.

"My dear sir, the court is no longer sitting," he said as Barrington appeared inclined to sound a protest. "As a solicitor I attest that the decision of the judge was good and sufficient."

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"So that is settled," said Jane. "Tomorrow we start, if I have to go on crutches. My ankle is better already. I shall sit up all night with a tube of analgesic to complete the cure. Don't look so glum, John. I'll help you spend your share."

Barrington looked up swiftly, imagining a hidden meaning in her words. She colored but returned his glance frankly.

Miss Griswold had left the room and Quigley followed her. He found the spinster clipping roses on the lawn with the manner of an executioner.

"I fear you are displeased with my decision," he said. "Later, I think you will both approve and applaud it."

"Surely, Mr. Quigley," she said, "that was not good law."

" 'Equity is a roguish thing,' " he quoted. "My dear madam, it may or may not be good law, but I can assure you that it is most excellent equity."

CHAPTER XIII

THE GRAVEN CROSSES

THE analgesic, or some more natural and potent charm, worked magic with Jane's ankle. She came in to breakfast with a beaming face and the slightest of limps, leaning on an ebony crutch-stick that had been her father's. She was dressed in riding togs.

"I am going on horseback," she announced. "It is a shame we haven't got a mount for Saratof but he shall have the most gorgeous of collars. My pony can graze and I will hold the map and direct the search. Are you coming, aunt? We are really going to find it this time."

Miss Griswold seemed still somewhat unreconciled to the situation but she was not without her sense of humor.

"I have too many things to attend to," she said. "Neither am I adapted for catching hares. But I wish you luck."

"I shall not go at all," protested Jane, "unless both you and John put better faces on the matter. There, that is very much better, John. You look amiable again."

He had smiled at her. The night had brought him cleared vision. He still held doubts as to the validity of Quigley's decision but, in the light of Jane's generosity, it seemed to him a churlish thing to combat it. He made a vow that she should not be the loser for it. If his dreams came true he could make a start in his profession, unhandicapped, and he felt confident of success. The events of the past two weeks had inspired him with a proper appreciation of his own possibilities.

"Before we go," he said, "I want to go to the village and assure myself that Judevine has shot his last bolt. If there is any danger of interference we want to protect ourselves against it."

"He is close to his limit," said Quigley. "I had a telephone message early this morning. The witness they were looking for seems likely to turn out to be the chauffeur they left in the sanitarium. I should have gone there this morning myself but, in deference to our expedition, I have left the matter to New York. They will probably act today. If the man has been deserted he is more than liable to talk freely. He is still at the sanitarium. I rang them up and assumed responsibility for the bill and they will hold him. He is not yet able to move."

"Good," said Barrington. "I'll saddle the mare and ride down to see if they have cleared out. I shall feel a good deal easier after I know whether the shot I fired at White was fatal. I have no wish to kill a man even in self-defense. Abrams called out that I had 'done for him,' meaning White, but I hope he exaggerated. I was, in a way, a trespasser of course, though they fired the first shot."

"You need not worry on that score," said Quigley. "I mean about the question of guilt, though I understand your compunctions. Would you like to use the mare afterward, Jane, instead of your own pony?"

"I should love to," she answered, accepting his *entente cordiale* with a smile.

Barrington could discover no signs of the marauders in or about the village. But, better than that, he traced them to the railroad station. With one man bearing an arm in a sling they had driven up in their car and caught the New York train by a scant margin, not stopping to purchase tickets, a short time after the fire must have started in the woods. The car they had left outside the little depot, abandoned to the call of the man they had hired it from when he was lucky enough to discover its whereabouts.

At ten o'clock they started once more upon their quest, Jane riding and the two men laden with implements and explosives.

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They made directly for the second ridge topped by the wall from which Barrington had taken his foundation stones. The first slope was steep, the second gradual and less encumbered with undergrowth and small trees than the hill which now lay burned and bare beyond the brook and the Bradley house. They set their march for a well-defined notch in the ridge, and Jane, riding ahead, announced discovery of the ancient fence.

"Oh, hurry!" she cried, her voice shrill with excitement. "Here is an oak and there are pines to my left!"

She dismounted with Barrington's assistance and ensconced herself upon the displaced stones, map in hand, her face alight with an eagerness that was infectious. They joined her and looked down the slope to where the big windows in the rear of the Bradley house, the original egress through which the buccaneer had issued with Black George Marvin to bury the treasure, gleamed encouragement in the sunshine.

The oak was a fine specimen of the tree that takes a hundred years to attain maturity and its magnificent umbrage promised shade for many a generation yet to come. Some two hundred feet along the wall in a southerly trend was a clump of pines on the other side of the barrier. Two of them showed as conspicuously older than the rest.

Twenty feet downhill below these was the big white stone of the chart. Time had effaced the maple stump that should have been beside it but the sterner monument remained intact, though much of its whiteness had changed to mossy green.

They decided to locate the other landmarks that made up the irregular quadrangle of the field of search before verifying the crosses. Eldad Bradley had chosen his marks wisely. Thirty feet by the tape below the oak stood the big rock, back of a maple tree that still maintained a time-worn crown.

Next they looked for the three pines, practically the key to the secret and the central bearing point for all the monuments. There was quite a grove of them, of all sizes and heights from conelings to one tall shaft that had been stripped of foliage and branches by lightning but still stood like a lance of the forest. Beside it, two of the older-appearing trees showed their bases to be in exact line. Returning to the maple Barrington sighted and Quigley followed an exact line that led to the first of the two piles of stones, readily identified by the spreading chestnut that shaded it.

The two men worked silently and swiftly as hounds upon a fresh scent, Jane watching them intently, all exhilarated by the opening up of the quest so successfully. Quigley returned to the wall and took up his station between the two pines so that the central of the three pines, the tall lightning-stricken pole, showed within the space and Barrington, guided by his shouts, crashed through dense brush and hazel thicket in search of the second pile of boulders.

There was no beech visible. A younger growth of birches had usurped its domain, but Barrington found the rotting remains beside the fourth corner, completing the square.

By this time it was noon and Amanda and a maid came up the hill bearing a basket with the picnic luncheon ordered by Jane. Now the latter declared herself too excited to eat but she found her appetite with the first mouthful and presided over the meal spread on a white cloth beside the spring from which gushed merrily the little stream marked on the map, as it had gurgled when Captain Eldad drafted the chart a hundred years before, while Black George, too weak to do anything but sit in the sun, watched him with eyes haunted by the fear of something he dreaded to behold.

The work of uncovering the crosses still lay before them, an arduous task, and they made the most of their rest time.

"Did you-all done fin' de gold?" asked Amanda, unable to restrain her curiosity as she waited upon them.

"Not yet, Amanda," said Barrington, "but we are close to it now, I think."

"Didn' I tell you-all that money was comin' to you, honey bright?" said the negress triumphantly. "Money an' a marriage," she added with a significant roll of her eyes from Jane to Barrington and back again. "De cya'ds am shuah an' de leaves make certain. Yes, indeed dey do."

Barrington's mare cropped daintily close beside them, nipping mint tips, nosing in the crystal spring and accepting the sugar and strawberries that Jane offered her. It was very pleasant in the woods.

They did not speak much and the twittering of the birds and the hum of insects created an atmosphere very remote from scenes of blood-stained decks, shot-riddled

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canvas and pirate loot. Only the sough of the breeze through the lace of the foliage overhead sounded like the murmur of surf seething gently upon a far-away beach.

Clear in the minds of all of them rose the vision of the buccaneer toiling in the wood, ardently believing in the curse, carving rude crosses in some vague twist of thought that the symbols of sanctity might ward off misfortune. There was no hint of malediction now with the sunshine dappling the ferns and butterflies hovering where Black George had lain dying of the "wound that never healed."

Luncheon over, they set to work in earnest. There was no need of dynamite to loosen soil or rock about the white stone below the two pines, where they commenced operations. The earth was moist with marsh and Barrington and Quigley rapidly removed the layers of leaf mulch and rich loam, exposing the face of the rock to where its base curved under.

Jane had bespoken the task of uncovering the crosses and came swiftly limping down at Barrington's call. Armed with a palette knife, she quickly scraped away the clinging dirt.

"Here is a cut," she said and picked eagerly at the damp soil that clogged two deeply chiseled grooves, disclosing the first of the graven crosses.

"Eureka!" she cried, her face flushed with exertion and triumph. "Now for the 'big rock' by the maple."

This proved a harder undertaking. The ground was stony and the years had cemented it into a hard conglomerate. Quigley held the drill while Barrington sledged the hole for the dynamite. It took six blasts to complete the job, both returning between explosions to pick and shovel out the debris before they reached the bottom of the rock and Jane found on the lower face the second cross.

She called a halt for which the men, though protesting and loath to desist, were grateful. They flung themselves upon the ferns and smoked a cigar apiece, prone upon their backs to ease the ache of their muscles.

The treasure seemed very real and close now and they attacked the piles with a will. It was strenuous work. The boulders had slid and sagged with gravity and weather and it was no slight matter to lever off the uppermost. They made the first onslaught on the pile by the rotted beech and the sun was tangled in the tree-tops at the crest of the hill before a well-placed blast rived the bottom boulder of the heap, leaving a miniature crater on the side that faced uphill. There was no need to scrape for the cross. It showed plainly, one arm of it fractured by the force of the explosive, but unmistakable.

Athrill with the closing in of the search, they stretched a line from the cross on the white stone to the one they had just disinterred. They had to fell some trees before they could draw it taut. It ran some fifteen feet to the south of the three pines, passing between the smaller trees.

Half of the boulders of the last monument by the chestnut had been heaved aside before they realized that the sun was below the hill and darkness rapidly ascending from the valley. The pale disc of the moon that had hung in the sky since mid-afternoon began to take on solidity and color but its light was still vague.

A horn sounded from below and they made out the figure of Amanda on the lawn beyond the brook. Barrington shouted and waved to her to come up and presently she arrived, panting with her climb.

"Missy Abigail she done say to come to dinneh," she said. "An' they's a long-dissance 'phone fo' you, Massa Quigley. They gwine to call agen in fifteen minnits. It's from New Yo'k."

"I must go," said Quigley. "It's more than likely to be important. We'll go right at it again after dinner. We'll have the moon and we can bring lanterns back with us."

"Dinner," retorted Jane scornfully. "Who wants dinner? Not me, for one. Of course you must attend to your message, Mr. Quigley, but John and I are going to stay here, aren't we, John?"

"I have no objections," he said smiling. "You have dinner with Miss Griswold, Quigley. I can handle the rest of this. You can bring me back some cigars and come prepared to count up the spoils."

"Fo' de land's sake, chile, you's got to eat!" exclaimed Amanda. "Missy Abigail, she's gwine to scold."

'Let her," scoffed Jane. "If John gets hungry from doing all the work while I loaf he can have the rest of the lunch. The bungalow isn't far away. We can go there if we have to."

Quigley was already half way down the

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hill and Amanda departed grumblingly while Barrington crowbarred off the remaining stones of the cairn and prepared half a stick of dynamite in the failing light. This he capped and fused and laid aside carefully.

"Do you think you can manage to hold the drill, Jane?" he asked. "We'll have to blast. It's getting too dark to risk bruising your hands with a slip of the sledge. I ought to have a lantern. Perhaps we had better wait after all till Quigley gets back, unless you'll change your mind and go down to dinner."

"There is just one thing I can't do," she said. "And that is *wait*. Here comes Amanda up the hill again. I suppose aunt is having a spasm of propriety. Well, I'm of age, and I am not going—unless you tell me to get off your land."

There was a touch of spirit in her tones that amounted to temper and Barrington realized the provocation for the first display of the sort he had ever seen in her.

"As long as Amanda is coming," he said, "I'll take the mare over to her stable and bring back a lantern from the bungalow."

He left as Amanda puffed up, Jane awaiting her with a determined tilt to her chin.

The negress had gone before Barrington returned, after having fed the mare. It was quite dark in the shadows of the trees and he hurried, swinging the lantern as he went. He found Jane seated on the basic boulder of the pile, her chin between her hands.

"Anything wrong?" he asked, swiftly intuitive of her mood.

"No-o," she hesitated. "It was only fancy, I suppose, but I thought I saw something move over there."

He followed the direction of her pointing finger to the shoulder of the hill that rose sharply at that place. The moon's arc practically paralleled it and the luminary looked like a golden wheel slowly rolling up the ascent. They watched for a few moments in silence. The wind waved some bush tops against the face of the moon and Jane laughed.

"That was it, of course. We've had so many adventures and alarms that I have become obsessed with the idea something is bound to happen before we get at the treasure. Aunt, by the way, is furious. She has detained Quigley almost by main force, according to Amanda, declaring she will not dine alone. As for you and me, sir, we are in for a fine dressing-down when we get back. But, seeing we are temporarily beyond the pale, I asked Amanda to get us something to eat in the bungalow after we have achieved victory. Is there anything in the larder?"

"Amanda will get something," said Barrington.

"Now then," she said, "how do I hold this drill?"

He showed her how to handle the bar and turn it and, hammering carefully by the light of the lantern, soon had a cavity ready for the dynamite.

"One blast will do it, I think," he said. "That ledge beneath the boulder should act as a leverage."

He touched a match to the fuse and helped her retreat to safety with the lantern, watching the sputtering twist. Suddenly she clutched his arm.

"See, John," she whispered. "There against the moon."

Barrington swiftly extinguished the lantern and gazed intently to where the moon was just clearing the hill. He could see nothing that seemed suspicious.

"I am almost certain I saw a creeping shadow cross it," she said. "Perhaps it was just nerves."

The shattering roar of the explosion distracted their attention and they crouched behind their tree as the fragments of rock thudded on the ferns and turf. In that instant the silhouette of a man, bent double swiftly darted across the face of the moon, followed by another.

CHAPTER XIV

TREASURE-TROVE

THEY listened and looked for several minutes after the sound of the explosion had subsided, but neither saw nor heard anything.

"There may or may not have been some one," said Barrington. "In either case we can't leave the treasure as it is for some one to jump in and reap the harvest at the last second. I've got my automatic and I brought up my electric torch. We'll have to work in the dark as much as possible and avoid using the lantern unless we can keep it shaded. Here's the torch, Jane. See if you can find the cross."

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The massive boulder had been fairly shattered and it was quite a while before Jane, on her hands and knees, using the torch ray with caution, found a fragment that showed a part of a cross. It was fairly easy to guess at its original position and Barrington fastened a cord there preparatory to stretching it to the big rock beside the maple. A great owl hooted as he stood up. Jane shivered.

"Take me with you," she said. "I can walk quite fairly well."

He could feel her quivering as she limped beside him.

"We should have waited until we got the guards from New York that Quigley suggested," he said. "I forgot it in the excitement until it was too late."

"If I had waited I should have died," she said. "Besides, Judevine and the rest have gone. It was just nerves on my part. You see I am more girl than boy after all, John."

He knew that by the soft firmness of her as she brushed against him on the uneven ground, and rejoiced in the fact that his comrade was of the opposite sex to his own.

It was with difficulty they managed to stretch the cord, stumbling over the hill through the checkered moonlight. As luck held at the last no trees had to be felled. They attached the other end of the line and then retraced the fateful thread to where the two lines crossed above the treasure. Barrington let the cord slip easily through his fingers and the girl followed his example, her cool hand in constant contact with his as they progressed foot by foot toward their goal.

He felt the intersection of the cords. As well as they could make out it was close to the spot that Quigley had first marked on the map. He stooped. The ground was fairly soft. They held their breath and listened. It was easy to imagine figures stealing toward them through the shadowy aisles, but they heard nothing but the cheep of a restless bird.

Barrington fetched a pick and a shovel. There was a little pool of moonlight that illumined the hiding-place of the hoard.

He attacked the ground with ardor, the pick making little noise in the comparatively soft soil, alternating with the shovel and throwing out great clods of earth until he had worked down to shoulder height. Then he cautiously relit the lantern, for the moonlight had shifted, and Jane held it a-swing in the excavation, seated cross-legged on the edge. The light threw her piquant face into startling contrast with the black background as she sat peering into the pit, listening with all her ear-sense, her right hand holding the automatic pistol.

A vigorous blow of the pick struck something more solid than dirt and Barrington tugged to release the implement from a board in which it was firmly imbedded. The plank wrenched from the nails that held it, scattering the loose dirt that rested on it. Disdaining the spade, Barrington scooped up the soil with his hands, Jane leaning far over the pit with the lantern.

"Give me the torch," said Barrington and she handed it to him. The white ray showed the boards of a coffer hooped with rusty iron. A second plank had rotted and Barrington tore it apart. A strip of canvas showed.

"I'm coming down, John," said the girl. "I can't stand it."

She slid into the pit, kneeling while Barrington ripped off the cover to the chest and then helped him to tug at the canvas. It was wrapped about some heavy objects. Their united strength lifted it for a second and it ripped, dropping with a muffled chink.

A HUNDRED years rolled back. Twentieth-century maid and man became for the moment misers tainted with the chink of gold.

There were bags of it. The moldering canvas seemed to disintegrate in the air and the coins to grow like fairy gold before their eyes, broad pieces of French and Spanish mintage. Jane took up a handful with glittering eyes and let the coins run between her fingers. Barrington was clawing through the mass to where a case of dark, brass-bound wood projected one corner from the gold.

He pried it open feverishly with the pick. It seemed as if a rainbow had been imprisoned in a casket. The box was filled with jeweled trinkets that shot intermingling rays from a myriad facets in the ray of the torch. Jane made a lap of the skirts of her riding coat and he poured the contents of the box into it as she sat with her back against the side of the excavation. A tray followed them. Behind it shone something that gleamed like a fiery snake as it un-

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coiled and then twined itself on top of the tangled mass of trinkets.

The girl lifted it almost reverently, sobered by the rich glory of the thing, a necklace of superb rubies, each gem a glowing globule of crimson fire.

The hoot of the owl sounded again. They looked up to see a gray shape drifting like a cloud, two luminous, malignant eyes glaring at them like pale emeralds.

"We can't carry all this gold with us," said John. "We can take the jewels. If you'll gather them up I'll cover up the gold with dirt and we'll go down to the bungalow. I'll telephone Quigley and we'll rig up something to pack it in."

He clambered out of the pit and she handed him the jewels. He pulled her up and hastily filled the hole with loose earth and strewed fern leaves on top of it, tearing down the guiding cords. They hurried across the hill to where the lamps lit by Amanda showed cheerily.

The negress met them at the door.

"I'se shuah pow'ful glad to see you bofe," she said. "I ain't easy skeered but I hate to be alone wifout you or de dog. They's hants about tonight."

"Hants? Nonsense, Amanda!" said Barrington sharply with a warning glance toward Jane who had seated herself in his big chair at the end of the living-room table, her face very pale in the lamplight. "You haven't seen or heard anything?" he queried.

"'Manda don' have to see 'em or hear 'em," declared the negress. "I done *feels* 'em. My kinky ole wool is jes' a-snappin'. Allus acts thetaway w'en they's spooks aroun' or somefing's gwine to happen."

"Bring us in something hot, Amanda," said Barrington, conscious of the girl's increasing pallor.

"Suppeh ain't fixed yet," she said. "I'll fetch in de tea."

She brought in an urn of water and lit the spirit lamp beneath it.

"It'll bile in a minnit or two," she announced and departed to return with cups and saucers and silver on a tray. "Suppeh in ten minnits," she said as she finally retreated after setting the table.

Barrington had been trying to get Quigley on the phone and now put down the instrument with a frown.

"I can't get any answer," he said. "The line seems to be open."

He frowned as he pulled down the blinds. They had put the jewels temporarily in an Indian basket that stood on the table and he picked them up.

Jane started suddenly to her feet, one hand held up in warning. Outside, on the veranda that surrounded the house, they distinctly heard the sound of footsteps.

"Where's the pistol?" asked Barrington.

The girl's face lengthened.

"I left it on the edge of the pit," she said. Barrington's brows contracted once more.

"And Quigley's got my other one," he muttered.

The veranda boards creaked again. Barrington snatched up the Indian basket, lifted the lid of the urn, dropped in the jewels and set the cap on the wick of the spirit lamp to extinguish it.

CHAPTER XV

JUDEVINE LAUGHS

THEY stood motionless while Barrington cast a despairing glance about the room for a weapon. The big fireplace, a staircase mounting beside it to the upper chambers, filled one end of the big room. A door opened on each of the sides to the veranda. Facing the fireplace were the entrances to Amanda's kitchen and her sleeping-quarters.

Barrington started for the fireplace to secure a heavy poker when there was the sound of a scuffle in the kitchen and the suppression of a cry. The side doors burst open simultaneously and four men rushed at Barrington while a fifth covered the girl with a pistol.

Barrington upswung a chair and crashed it down upon the head of his nearest assailant. The rungs broke and the man's skull was trapped in the bottom of the chair. The next instant some one flung himself at Barrington's knees, two more seized his arms and the fourth attacked with brass knuckles. He went down fighting furiously, the men clinging to him like leeches, blood dripping from a cut in his temple.

The odds decided the battle after a few panting minutes. Barrington was thrust into a chair and his ankles and wrists tied with brutal force. Jane was secured less harshly and pushed back into the big chair where she faced the men with her eyes blaz-

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ing in her colorless face. The man who had first menaced her with the pistol fronted Barrington. It was Nosey Abrams.

"We got you now," said the little Jew. "Vait, vait till Judevine sees you."

He slapped Barrington's face with his hand and yelped as the latter kicked out sharply with both bound feet and reached his shins.

The men laughed. They were a pasty-faced crew, dressed in clothes that proclaimed them the scourings of New York, the riff-raff recruits of Judevine's associates, users of drugs, shifty-eyed and rat-faced with one common expression of crafty malice. In a fair fight Barrington could have taken them two at a time and disposed of them easily. Now some of them laid pistols on the table that they took from their pockets and one tossed down the brass knuckles with which he had gashed Barrington's forehead.

The door to the kitchen opened and two more came in.

"Trussed the old girl up like a chicken," said one of them. "Where's Judevine?"

"Him and the Spider ain't got back yet." said Abrams.

"Well, there ain't any hurry," said the first speaker. "We've got things to ourselves. Wonder if there's any booze in the place."

They did not seem to pay much attention to the girl, for which Barrington was grateful, but started to ransack the room, They soon discovered his store of liquors in a wall cupboard beside the fireplace and helped themselves freely and without discrimination, joking about the success of their raid, apparently awaiting the arrival of a leader in Judevine.

Abrams, drinking from a bottle, came over to Barrington and sent the fumes of his liquor-laden breath into the latter's face as he advanced his own cautiously toward Barrington, well out of reach of any sudden move.

"Your dog tear my throat," he said. "Vell I get even. Belief me mister, I get even. I cut his —— throat."

Barrington looked through him to the wall, thankful that Saratof was safe at the other house. It was little use to shout, he reflected. The bungalow was too far from the house and they would gag him if he started any outcry. Filled with chagrin for having placed the girl in danger he glanced at her. She smiled bravely at him.

"It's lucky we got Quigley on the telephone," she said. "They'll be here any minute."

One or two of the men started but the one who had spoken of trussing Amanda laughed.

"That trick's too thin," he said. "You're a cool one, for a rag, but we attended to Wrigley, or whatever you call him, before we came over here. There they are, boys."

A side door opened and Judevine came in with the man they had called the Spider, a cadaverous individual with a broken nose. Between them they carried a litter of boughs and canvas, tramping heavily over the floor with it and setting it down with a grunt. The gold of the treasure clinked and gleamed dully in the lamplight. The rest crowded about it but Judevine ordered them back.

"Time enough for that," he said. "There's better than this—sparklers and a string of rubies."

He swaggered over to where the girl sat.

"I wasn't good enough for you, was I?" he said. "Well, now you ain't good enough for me. I'm going to take the treasure and then I'm going to give you and that lover of yours the taste of hell I promised him. You slipped out of it in the woods but you won't this time. Because we ain't going to leave any one to snitch on us after we make our getaway."

She looked at him with cold, contemptuous eyes and a silence that stung him into fury.

"But first we'll have a little fun with this gent," he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder at Barrington. "And you'll play audience. It ain't going to be pretty. A sort of comedy drama with the comedy on our side and the drama on yours."

He was working himself into an uncontrollable rage as she continued to look as if she were unconscious of his presence.

"You'll listen to me, —— you, when I speak!" he shouted, taking her chin roughly and forcing her face upward.

Barrington forced himself to his feet with a violent effort and flung himself against the table. The girl was at the head of it and Judevine at the corner. The sharp edge of the heavy slab of oak struck the bully across the hips and sent him staggering. He tripped over the chair and fell headlong to the floor.

He got up slowly, glaring at his men, his teeth showing between his curled lips and

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walked round the table to where Barrington lay helpless.

"I'll trim you properly for that," he said, kicking him heavily in the ribs. "I wish I had more time to waste on you but we've got a long trip before morning and lots to do.

"You thought you had the laugh on me, didn't you?" he went on savagely. "You thought you were oversmart, didn't you, you and your —— cur. I'll find him in a minute and settle his hash." He forced a harsh laugh. "Why, you're easy!" he cried. "I suppose you thought you'd scared us away. We took the New York train all right but we came back again and brought some pals along. We didn't get off at Chester. We went to Brooktown and came back by way of the house. Some of these lads collect curios they find in other people's houses and they picked up quite a little. We've got your lawyer-fox strapped up with the old girl and the maids. We persuaded one of them to tell us where you'd gone. We were a bit late in locating you till you was sucker enough to flash a light, after you'd saved us the trouble of doing the hard digging. We've got the gold. Now come across with the jewels."

The men had picked up Barrington and put him back on the chair. Saratof was evidently safe. They had not found him in Jane's "cave."

"You yellow hound," he said to Judevine, "I am going to speak for the satisfaction of telling you what I think of you. If I had my hands free for a minute——"

"But you ain't," sneered Judevine, "and I'd stick a rung of that chair in your jaws if I wasn't going to make you come through. Where are the rubies?"

Barrington closed his lips firmly.

"Put him on the table, boys," said Judevine, "we'll make him talk."

They seized Barrington and laid him on the top of the table, holding him down.

"Start a fire," said Judevine. "Use that chair. Put that poker in it. Now take off his shoes, one of you."

The man was beside himself with rage. Foam gathered at the corners of his evil mouth and he wiped it off.

"I'll give you one more chance," he said. "If you don't, I'm going to brand you on your feet till you do."

The little Jew was tugging at the shoelaces, grinning at his task. A man thrust the poker into the now blazing fire which he had started with oil from a bracket lamp.

"Going to tell?" asked Judevine.

"No."

"Give me a bit of that wood, we can't wait for the poker," said Judevine.

"No, no," cried the girl. "Don't burn him. I'll tell. They are in the water in the urn."

CHAPTER XVI

THE SPIDER TAKES HOLD

JUDEVINE lifted the lid of the urn and plunged his hand inside. He withdrew it with a howl of pain as the boiling water scalded his fingers, knocking the urn to the floor where he kicked at it. The Jew ran forward and gingerly picked it up, emptying the precious contents on the table. The ruffians gathered round in an excited mob and Judevine grabbed the necklace and put it in his pocket.

"Hold on a minute," he said. "I ain't through with my friend here yet." He sucked at his blistering fingers.

"This is just a taste of what you're both going to get," he said. "Do you know what I'm going to do with you? I'm going to leave you both here on the table together, side by side, like you sweethearts ought to be. I'm going to soak you both with kerosene and before we go I'm going to see this dump properly lighted. I'll start the fire under this table. They may find some of the house but they won't find you."

The Spider stepped forward and was about to speak when a crash came from the kitchen. One of the men hurried to the door and opened it.

"The coon's upset the table on herself," he said with a grin. "She's lying there covered with hash tools."

"Never mind her," said Judevine brutally. "Put the girl on the table."

Before any one could carry out his order the Spider interfered.

"Hold on, Jim," he said. "You've gone off your nut. I ain't squeamish. I'd slit a throat if I had to and I didn't butt in when you wanted to toast this guy's feet. But we've got the jewels now and there ain't any sense in running things too far. You've been talking crazy about your revenge and burning up houses. To —— with your revenge! We helped you out to get hold of a chunk of money and I for one ain't going

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to run no fool risks after we've got what we wanted. We've fixed a good getaway. But if we pull this rough stuff of yours they'll chase us round the map till they get us. If we get pinched I'd rather sit for ten years in an eight-by-five at Sing Sing than decorate the chair long enough for them to turn the juice on and off."

"I'm running this," said Judevine sullenly.

"Well, you ain't running it right. You've gone bughouse and you ain't going to put us in Dutch. We've been here long enough. It's time to make the divvy. You've copped the best part of it and stuck it in your pocket. Take it out and we'll pass the beads around. It's going to be share and share alike."

The rest of the men backed him up with a general assent.

"You know what I promised you," said Judevine. "There's nine of us. The rubies are mine. I found out about this lay, didn't I? The gold is going to be split twenty ways. There's plenty of it. Each of you gets one share as soon as we get it safe to the hide-out."

"And you get twelve shares of the coin! Nix. And we don't wait till we get clear. We split *now*. If we run into anything I want to know where I can lay my hands on my whack for a quick getaway, and I guess the rest of the boys are with me. We'll split the beads like I said, and we'll split the brooches and junk, then we'll put the coin into ten lots. You get an extra one for tipping off the lay and starting it. That's fair, and that's all you get."

"Hold on! Hold on!" said the Jew excitedly. "Vere do I come in? I financed this trick. Should I get nothing extra?"

"You'll get a crack on the jaw that'll lay you out cold if you don't shut up," said the Spider.

Abrams shrank back whimpering while the rest laughed at him.

"Now then, dig up those rubies."

Judevine looked at the Spider who stood with his hand palm upward waiting for the necklace, the rest behind him in a semicircle.

The telephone rang sharply. The Spider spun upon his heel.

"What's your number, you?" he asked Barrington.

"Seven one eight, ring three on this line."

The bell had sounded four times.

"That's too glib to be the truth," said the Spider.

"Here's the book," said Abrams, searching through the pages. "Sure is he telling the truth. Seven-one-eight-three."

"Then he's a bigger fool than I thought him," said the Spider, who had now definitely assumed the leadership. The bell rang again. "We ought to have cut that wire," he said.

Jane had edged closer to the table. The telephone was close to the chair. She knew that Barrington's number was originally four and that it had been changed too recently for it to appear in the last issue of the directory. With a jerk of her elbow she knocked the receiver from its hook and shouted "Help!" into the mouthpiece at the top of her lungs.

One of the men flung her back into the chair and tore the instrument from its attachment.

"That don't do you no good, lady," said the Spider reprovingly. "They won't know who called. I reckon there's too many parties on this line for them to find out in a hurry. I've tried to treat you right and now you've started trouble. We've got to be going, pals," he said, "before they locate that pipe she let out. Come through, Jim."

He once more extended his hand. Judevine's face was convulsed. He reached swiftly for his hip pocket, but the Spider, ex-pugilist and present crook, was too fast for him. His open palm doubled, his forearm shot up stiffly and Judevine fell like a log with a jab straight to the point.

The Spider turned him over and coolly extracted the rubies from his pocket.

"Get this chap off the table," he said, "and put the coin up here."

He broke the strand of the necklace with a snap and cupped the rubies in his hand where they lay like a pool of blood.

The men lifted Barrington and dropped him on the floor. Then they piled up the coins, gathering round with greedy eyes.

"Come here, you," said the Spider to the Jew. "Pile that up into nine heaps—nine—and make 'em even. Jim gets one share, like I said, to salve his jaw. Let's see what the other junk looks like."

He spread out the ornaments and began dividing them.

BARRINGTON rolled over on his back and lay close by Jane's chair. From his position he faced the door of the kitchen. Through the legs of the

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men crowded about the table he could see the handle swiftly turning.

The door was flung open and the person of the giant negress appeared. Her clothing was torn and the strands of the clothes-line with which they had bound her trailed from her wrists and ankles. Her crisp gray hair framed her black face, the nostrils wide open, the little eyes afire. Blood dropped on the floor from one hand and streamed down from her thick lips which held a long knife. She flourished a rifle as she advanced into the room, looking like a savage African chieftainess.

"Line up! Line up!" she cried as the astonished men turned to face her. "Up to that fiahplace. Back wid the lot of you or I'll blow you to the oder sho'."

There was no mistaking her purpose. The men backed and sidled to the big fireplace. Once the Spider started to lower the hands he had raised and she pointed the rifle at his head.

"I done got mah eye on you!" she cried. "You go first. Mah fingeh's jes' a-tremblin' on the triggeh. You go first—an' *you* nex'."

She glared at the man who had bound her and he backed behind his fellows into the cavity of the fireplace where the fire Judevine had started still smoldered.

"All of you pile in theah," she said. "Neveh min' de ashes."

It was ludicrous to see the crestfallen men trying to crowd into the opening. Amanda went to the table with a keen look at the prostrate body of Judevine. Still pointing the rifle with one hand, she took the knife from her mouth in her left and severed the cords that bound Jane.

"I'd like to mark 'em all wif that slasheh, honey bright," she crooned. "A-frightenin' an' a-tyin' up my lamb. Now you fix Massa John an' I'll hannle dis yeah gang."

She stood here in front of the huddle of men as Jane cut the ropes from Barrington. His wrists and ankles refused to serve him and it took him several seconds before he could scramble to his feet. A cry from Jane called his attention to Judevine who had revived and was trying to get the pistol from his pocket while still lying on the floor.

Barrington vaulted across the table, scattering the gold and jewels in a tinkling shower. He landed fairly on Judevine as the latter pulled trigger, kicking the gun from his hands and swinging heavily to the side of his head while the pistol went slithering across the floor toward the fireplace.

This time Judevine went out completely, his jaw dislocated. Barrington started to retrieve the pistol and saw Amanda slowly swaying, supporting herself by the table. Judevine's bullet had gone through her shoulder-blade. Even as he looked the rifle clattered to the floor.

"Run, Jane, run!" he shouted.

As the girl hesitated two of the men darted ahead of the rest who were all coming out of the fireplace and started to cut off the girl. Barrington dropped the first with a hard punch that drove back the fellow's head. As the second came on, raising his pistol to fire, he flung a handful of the coins snatched from the table with all his force in the man's face. Then they were on him. Only one idle shot was fired before he became the center of a mêlée too thick for safe shooting. He heard the door slam behind Jane as he went down under the sheer weight of his foes.

The Spider detached himself from the mix-up and, with another man, leaped across the floor in pursuit of Jane. Before they reached the door it opened in their faces. Four men shoved them back and advanced with drawn weapons.

"The jig's up, boys," said the leader of the new arrivals. "Drop the 'gat,' Spider, the house is surrounded."

CHAPTER XVII

QUIGLEY TALKS TO HIMSELF

QUIGLEY came in with Jane who ran immediately to the side of Amanda, placed by Barrington and one of the plain-clothes men in the big chair.

"I'm all right, chile," she said. "Don' you fuss. Ain't none of dat crowd of bully boys gwine to do fo' 'Manda."

"We had better try and get you down to the other house, Amanda," said Barrington. "This phone is broken. We'll have to get a surgeon from there."

"Ah'll stay right heah, Massa John. Mah own featheh bed is good to me. I ce'tunly stahtled thet crowd of fly-by-nights. Yes, indeed. Had me tied up but I upsot de kitchen table an' grabbed a knife in mah teef. I rolls oveh on all fo's an' de res' was easy. But you-all got to show me how to shoot off dat rifle, Massa John, fo' de triggeh's mighty stiff."

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Barrington picked up the rifle and laughed. The safety device was still locking the triggers.

"When I got back to the house after I left you," said Quigley, "they telephoned me that our men were on the way. They left New York this morning and got a confession out of the man at the sanitarium. He was with Judevine when he broke into his stepmother's cottage and ripped the map from the mattress. He probably scared her to death, according to the autopsy, but he'll join his father before long."

The detectives had rounded up the Spider and the others and they stood in a forlorn, handcuffed group.

"I tell you all aboudt it," commenced Abrams when the Spider shoved his elbow roughly into the Jew's mouth.

"You don't have to tell us anything," said the chief detective. "There's plenty of evidence. A tidy little lot of stuff, sir," he said to Barrington. "You and the lady had a close call of it. We'll relieve you of their company. We found the two cars they came in by the side of the road. They'll serve as police vans. Bring 'em along."

"They surprised us at dinner," said Quigley after Judevine and the others had departed for their deserts. "Looted the house and bound us. Miss Griswold fainted and they scared the wits out of one of the maids and frightened the other into telling where you were. They were in too much of a hurry to make a real search and they overlooked Saratof. We stayed bound till the detectives arrived. We tried to ring up the bungalow and heard the call for help just as we were starting out. We met Jane at the entrance, as you know."

The girl had helped Amanda to her room and now returned.

"John," she said. "It's an anticlimax, I know, but I'm famishing. Let's you and I get supper. We can't leave Amanda till the surgeon comes that the detective is going to send. And some one must stay with her even then."

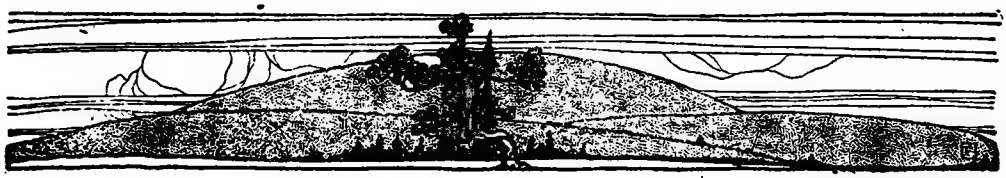
"I think I could persuade Miss Griswold to come up the hill," said Quigley. "She is not keen about staying in the house after what happened."

"We'll all stay here tonight," said the girl. "Have you room, John? We can camp anyhow. Tomorrow, if we want to, we can start for Europe."

She looked at the room. The coins were everywhere, the ornaments on the floor and the rubies gleaming here and there where they had rolled from the table where the Spider had laid them for division.

"A regular Tom Tiddler's ground," said Quigley. "I'll be going down the hill now. Two of the men are coming back to act as guard tonight. They'll stay outside. You don't have to bother about them."

He spoke to the empty room. Jane and Barrington had disappeared into the kitchen and closed the door.



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Author of "The White Queen of Sandakan," "The Soul of King Throsh," etc.

CHA-CHA was wondrously beautiful. Her skin was velvety, cream-tinted, strangely luminous. Her hair, waist-long and abundant, held a sheen like that upon the under-wing of the bird of paradise, and her lips, poppy-red, moist and passion-stirring, were the lips of Daphne that lured Apollo to pursue.

But it was Cha-Cha's eyes that arrested attention. They were big, laughter-filled, fun-seeking eyes, tinted with that wonderful blue that comes in Summertime to the seas around Ibiza. They were the headquarters of mirth, beautiful dispellers of gloom that made Cha-Cha the lovable, kittenish, joy-bringing thing that she was.

Cha-Cha had come from Urmia, away out beyond the White Desert. She was a present to a very great man in Erzerum, and she was packed up and sent off with a caravan that carried rugs and spices, beautifully carved things made from scented woods, and fivescore pussy-cats, white with smoke-tinted ears and tails, the kind that bring big prices in the bazaars of Erzerum and Trebizond.

It was a wonderful journey for Cha-Cha. Days of magic when the shy winds of the desert touched Cha-Cha's soft cheeks and fled hurriedly as if startled at their own temerity. And there were nights of mystery when the stars swung low and their beams danced in the big blue eyes that looked upward.

It was at the end of the journey that the camel boy gave Cha-Cha the kitten. The boy had purchased the pussy-cat with the little bag of coins that he had been saving for months, and he brought the soft-purring thing to Cha-Cha, a bashful look upon his sun-tanned face.

"She is like you," he murmured, placing the kitten in the arms of the girl. "She is sweet and beautiful and she has big blue eyes. Take her from me; she will bring you good luck."

"She *is* like me," cried Cha-Cha, smiling up at the boy. "Are you sure that she will bring me luck?"

"Certain," he answered.

Cha-Cha put out her little plump hand, and the camel-boy kissed it reverently; then, as he stood watching Cha-Cha fondle the kitten, a fat unwieldy man with a curious dead face came up and inquired for the girl.

"But you are not my master?" cried the girl, holding the kitten close.

The fat man made a curious sound that showed amusement at her question.

"I am the servant of your master," he

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said. "He is away, miles and miles away. I have come to fetch you to his house."

THERE followed quiet sunshiny days for Cha-Cha and the kitten, sherbet and nougat days. The two played in rug-covered rooms shielded by closely latticed screens from the gaze of persons passing in the street below. The girl and the kitten couldn't see the passers-by, but up through the latticework came the soothing *swish swish* of slippered feet, the *tap tap* of the brass-worker's hammers and the sleepy calls of the street venders.

During those days Cha-Cha would pause in her play and ask questions of the fat man with the lifeless face who ordered her food and bullied the soft-footed servants.

"When will my master return?" she asked one day.

"When they are all killed," he answered.

"When who are all killed?" questioned Cha-Cha.

"The Christians."

"Are they bad people, the Christians?" inquired the girl.

"They are devils," said the fat man. "We are fighting them."

It was nothing much for Cha-Cha or the kitten to worry about. They ate and slept, curled up together on the soft cushions. The camel-boy was right about the kitten. It was like the girl. It was a playful, frolicsome little thing, content to drink its milk, sleep in the sunshine and amuse itself by playing with the tiny gold bells on Cha-Cha's ankles.

On another day Cha-Cha questioned the fat man about the looks of her master.

"Is he handsome?" she asked.

The fat man looked cautiously around the room, then addressed a canary singing in a tortoise-shell cage.

"Is the rock snake handsome?" he asked the bird. "Is the green centipede handsome? La, la, la."

"Is he kind?" asked Cha-Cha.

The fat man bared his arm and showed it to the singing canary. A scar, that looked as if it had been made by a hot iron, extended from the wrist to the elbow.

"Here is the mark of his embrace," he said, face turned toward the cage. "The jaguar leaves marks like these."

"La, la, la," said Cha-Cha, imitating the fat man, then, being very young and carefree, the look of surprise went from her eyes and she started to romp with the kitten in the sunshine.

Then came the noises. They came to Cha-Cha and the kitten through the latticed shutters of the rooms. They were astonishing noises, dull, booming noises that shook the foundations of the old house.

"What is it?" she asked of the fat man.

"Thunder," he answered.

"Thunder?" repeated Cha-Cha.

"Yes, yes," he muttered irritably, "there is a storm."

Cha-Cha whispered into the ear of the blue-eyed kitten who looked as if she too was upset by the strange noises.

"It is thunder," she murmured. "Do not be afraid, sweet one. Come we will play."

The noises increased. The dull booming sound grew and grew. And Cha-Cha, listening on the latticed balcony, found that a new note had crept into the sounds which came up to her from the street. The distant thunder had accelerated the pulse-beat of the city. The soft *swish swish* of slippered feet, that told of lounging ease, was flattened out by the quick *plop plop* of hurrying pedestrians.

The street venders' cries were throttled, the music died away, and up through the soft sunshine came occasional yells and screams that bred fear. An air of horrible expectancy settled upon the town. Cha-Cha and the kitten listened intently, terror showing in the eyes of each.

Again Cha-Cha questioned the fat man.

"Tell me!" she cried. "What makes the noises, the horrible noises?"

"The Christians," he answered. "They shriek like that as we kill them."

"But the sounds are not screams!" said Cha-Cha.

"Yes, they are," he said wagging his curiously shaped head. "We are killing thousands of them. Fools in the bazaar think they are beating us back, but they are wrong."

Cha-Cha whispered the words of the fat man to the kitten, but the kitten gave no sign that she received any comfort from hearing them. And as the hours passed Cha-Cha began to doubt the fat man's source of information.

The terrible rumbling noises were not the cries of frightened Christians. She was certain of that. And beneath her in the street, the street which she could not see,

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the seed of terror sown by the noises grew and blossomed. The screams of men, women and children came to her through the latticework, the beat of flying feet was deafening. The whole population of the city seemed to be running, running madly as if to escape some terrible cataclysm that was approaching.

FOR hours Cha-Cha, holding the kitten to her breast, sat like a person in a trance and listened. Three times she rang her little silver bell but no servant came in answer to her summons. She wanted milk for the kitten, the frightened kitten that meowed fearfully and snuggled close to Cha-Cha when the terrifying noises surged up through the green-painted slats into the heavily perfumed atmosphere of the room.

The thundrous tumult welled louder. Louder! It was deafening! It crashed against the house, leaped through the latticed openings and pursued the fleeing silence through the empty rooms.

Cha-Cha thrust her fingers into her ears and screamed. Where were the servants? Where was the fat man? Why had they deserted her? She buried her face in the cushions and sobbed loudly; the kitten licked her cheeks with a soft little tongue.

Noises came from the rooms below, horrible noises; yells cut short in the middle, a scream that reached its highest note and died away in a choking gurgle, the crash of heavy boots in the passage.

Cha-Cha got to her feet and moved toward the door. There were noises on the stairs leading to her rooms. The owner of the heavy boots was coming up swiftly, evidently in pursuit of some one whose quick breathing came to the girl's ears.

Cha-Cha crouched against the wall. The silk curtain that hid the door-opening was thrust aside and into the room leaped the fat man, his mouth open, his eyes wide and frog-like. Death was upon the fat man. It sprang after him as he came through the door, a sharp flashing tongue of steel that struck him between the shoulder blades, and he stumbled forward on the cushions.

Cha-Cha, who had shut her eyes to blot out the sight, opened them and looked at the killer. He was a giant, a great big fair-haired giant in a uniform of green embroidered with gold; upon his chest a cross that flashed as the sunlight fell upon it. He had a lean, clean-shaven face, with strange yellow- and green-tinted eyes, and, leaning on his big sword, he surveyed Cha-Cha as if she were something the like of which he had never seen before.

For a full minute he stared at the girl, then he strode forward. Cha-Cha shrank back from him, and he laughed softly. He put out a big muscular hand, and the kitten, clasped to Cha-Cha's breast, spat spitefully and clawed at him. The kitten thought that the giant wished to take her from her mistress, but it was something else which the big man required at that moment.

Upon the girl's neck was a large emerald, suspended by a thin gold chain, and the giant desired it. His fingers gripped the gem, and with a little jerk he broke the chain.

Cha-Cha cried out in fear, and again the giant laughed.

"What is your name?" he asked, speaking in her own tongue.

"Cha-Cha," murmured the girl.

"Cha-Cha," he said, rolling the name upon his tongue as if it was a sweet morsel that he desired to cling to. "And where did you come from?"

"From Urmia."

"So. They are very beautiful there," he said. "I saw a woman who came——"

He stopped abruptly and turned toward the door through which he had entered. Another giant, also in green and gold, had appeared at the entrance, and upon the second man's face as he stared at Cha-Cha was the same look of surprise and amazement that had appeared upon the first comer's when his gaze had fallen upon the girl.

For a moment the giant who had taken the emerald from Cha-Cha's neck glared at the newcomer, then he hurled out an oath and pointed to the door.

"Leave!" he cried.

The man at the door continued to stare at Cha-Cha, and the temper of the other boiled over. He dropped his sword and sprang. His fist landed on the face of the man who had found it impossible to tear himself away from the fluffy vision crouching against the wall, and the second giant let out a roar of rage and grappled with the first comer.

Cha-Cha, holding the kitten against her breast, watched the struggle. They were two big men and they fought like wild

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beasts. They tripped over the little sherbet stands, smashing them into fragments with their big boots. They caromed against the latticework, splintering it with the force of the collision, their curses and cries of rage bringing blind terror to the heart of the watching girl.

Back to the door they staggered, locked together. For a few minutes they swayed backward and forward, then the first comer, the man who had torn the emerald from the neck of Cha-Cha, lifted the other with a mighty effort and hurled him through the door and down the stairs.

Crouching like an animal the winner waited. A groan came from below, then after a little while Cha-Cha heard the sounds of heavy boots moving slowly along the corridor beneath her.

The yellow-eyed man turned to the girl. He looked her over carefully, grunting now and then when he discovered fresh points of beauty which made him understand why his brother officer had fought so madly for her, then, stepping forward, he picked up the emerald pendant that had been dropped in the fight, and, with clumsy fingers, he knotted the gold chain around the neck of the girl.

"My name is Yagof," he said quietly. "I am called Little Yagof. I am a captain of Cossacks."

There was blood upon his cheek, and Cha-Cha lifted a dainty hand and pointed to it. The giant laughed grimly.

"Nothing, my little one," he said. "Nothing at all."

He put out his hand and touched the girl's arm, but she stepped back from him, her big blue eyes fixed upon his blood-stained fingers. Yagof laughed. Stooping, he picked up a damask cushion, wiped his fingers upon it, and again reaching forward, he touched a braid of the wonderful hair that came down over Cha-Cha's breast in a great serpent-like coil.

"You are wonderful," he muttered. "I have never seen a woman more beautiful."

"You are one of the Christians?" asked Cha-Cha tremulously.

"Ay," he cried, "I am a Christian."

"Then you will be good to me. They told me at Urmia that the Christians were kind to women."

Captain Yagof considered a moment. He ran his muscular fingers through the mop of fair hair, and a perplexed look came into his eyes.

'Sometimes," he muttered. "Sometimes."

Three hairy brutes thrust their heads through the door, and Cha-Cha gave a little scream of fear. Yagof turned swiftly, hurled an order at them and they fled hurriedly.

"Don't be afraid," he said, turning to the girl.

"But I am afraid," said Cha-Cha. "I am very, very much afraid. You are a Christian. Please help me."

Captain Yagof again disturbed his mop of hair with his strong fingers. His eyes were upon Cha-Cha—Cha-Cha with the cream-tinted skin, the big blue eyes and the poppy-red mouth.

"The colonel," he said haltingly, "why he, the colonel, will not allow any women to travel with us."

Again the curtain was pushed aside, and Yagof struck with the flat of his sword at the brutish face that was thrust into the room. The man stumbled backward, crashed down the stairs, cursing and screaming as he fell.

"They are our soldiers," explained Yagof. "They hate the Turks and we can not hold them. They are wild men."

Cha-Cha stepped forward and touched Yagof's arm.

"Let me come with you," she cried. "Please! Please! I—I am afraid of the others!"

Captain Yagof rubbed the back of his head and looked around helplessly. The kitten meowed softly as if supporting the plea of her mistress. From the street came wild cries of triumph, the blare of trumpets, the heavy rumble of the guns.

The curtain before the door swayed gently and Captain Yagof sprang into an embrasure. The brutish face of the Cossack that Yagof had struck with the flat of his sword appeared again, and there was a look of fiendish delight in the soldier's face as his eyes fell upon Cha-Cha. He moved toward her, and, as she shrank from him, the captain sprang from his hiding-place and gripped the neck of the intruder.

With his bare fists Yagof pounded the brutish face till the man screamed for mercy. Then the officer roared out an order and thrust the soldier from the room.

"You are taking me?" cried Cha-Cha. "You have sent him for something?"

"Ay," he said, "I have sent him for my bag."

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"Your bag?"

"Ay, you must travel in my bag. The colonel, little one! He is a devil! You must hide in the bag, and when we have chased the accursed Turk into the sea I will talk to you. Here they come with the bag."

The Cossack who had been despatched upon the errand, and another soldier, equally wild and uncouth, came into the room, carrying between them a huge bag of untanned calfskin. Cha-Cha had never seen such a bag. It was big enough to hold the wearing apparel of a whole family, and she stared at it in amazement as they put it down upon the floor and opened it.

Captain Yagof took up his sword and deftly slashed a hole in the side of the bag, leaving the flap of skin so that it would not be noticed. Then he turned to Cha-Cha.

"Get in," he said shortly.

"In the bag?" cried the girl.

"Ay! See, I have cut a place so that you can breathe. But, by the bones of St. Catherine, don't let any one see your face if you look through your breathing-hole! Quick! We will be on the march in ten minutes. Throw away the cat and get in!"

"But I must take my kitten!" cried Cha-Cha. "I must! Oh, I must! She is a lucky kitten!"

The giant swore in an undertone. A bugle-call rang out above the riot of sounds, loud, insistent.

"Take her!" he growled. "Quick! There's the bugle! This is my servant. He will watch over you and bring you food."

Cha-Cha, her big blue eyes wide with fear, stepped into the bag and crouched down in it. The servant and the hairy Cossack whom Yagof had hammered with his fists closed it quickly, and for a moment Cha-Cha felt that she was being smothered. She groped madly for the breathing-hole as the two soldiers lifted her up. She thought she would never find it, then, suddenly, it was opened for her from the outside, and Yagof spoke to her.

"I am a fool," he said gruffly. "A big fool. Ay, I am. If the colonel sees you it is good-by to Little Yagof. Be quiet, and if you can pray, pray. The colonel is a devil!"

THE two soldiers moved down the stairs, and Cha-Cha's fears increased. She wondered where they were going. Chasing the Turks, Yagof had said. Chasing them where? She wept as she was jolted backward and forward, and the kitten licked her face and nestled against her in an effort to comfort her.

The two soldiers carried the bag out into the street. Cha-Cha lifted the flap and peeped out. The street was crowded with men in green uniforms, big men with great hairy faces who laughed and shouted and sang wild songs. One of them slapped the side of the bag, and the weight of his big hand nearly stunned the kitten upon whose head came the full force of the blow.

Again the blare of the bugle rang out, and Cha-Cha heard the voice of Yagof urging the two soldiers to greater speed. They broke into a run, and she clutched the kitten and held her breath.

She heard the rumble of a wagon, heard Yagof shout out an order, felt herself lifted high, then the bottom of the bag came down upon something hard and firm and she was carried forward swiftly. The bag had been lifted onto an ammunition wagon that was moving at a hard gallop down the crooked streets of the city.

Cha-Cha thought that she would go insane during the hours that followed. They were hours of agony, of torment. The ammunition wagon never slackened speed when it left the comparatively good roads of the city for the bad roads of the country. The driver flogged his horses, and Cha-Cha and the kitten were rocked from side to side.

Once she lifted the flap of the breathing-hole with the intention of asking the driver of the vehicle to kill her so that she could escape further suffering, but the face of Yagof's servant appeared at the opening and he spoke softly to her.

"Be quiet," he whispered. "Do not be alarmed. We will camp soon."

The servant spoke the truth. The wagon halted, and the big bag was lifted off and carried to the shelter of some trees along the road. The servant opened it and informed Cha-Cha that a tent would be immediately erected and she would then be able to step from her hiding-place.

The servant was as good as his word. He hurriedly erected a small tent above the big calfskin bag, and Cha-Cha and the kitten, much bruised and shaken and very, very much afraid, climbed out.

Captain Yagof's voice came to the girl's ears as she stood listening. The flap of the tent was drawn aside and the lean face of the Cossack officer confronted her.

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"Well, my beautiful one," he said, "and how did you like the ride?"

"It was dreadful!" she cried.

He laughed softly.

"Perhaps," he said, "but you wanted to come."

He paused for a moment; then he added, his curious yellow eyes fixed upon her face—

"And I wanted to take you."

She clasped the kitten tight and moved back from him, and Yagof laughed. Outside the hubbub increased. The noise of a hundred bugles rose like lariats of sound above the dull rumbling earth - chained noises of gun carriages and ammunition wagons.

Great sound combers rolled across the landscape, crashing through the trees and sending a million echoes out across the flat plains.

"Where are we going?" gasped Cha-Cha.

"Where?" cried Yagof, his lean face lighting up at her question. "Why we are going to chase the Turk into the sea! Listen!"

Again the penetrating bugle-calls went up like whips of sound circling over the heavier noises.

"Listen!" repeated Yagof. "Trumpets out of Russia! Out of Russia, little one! Threescore years of hate are sweeping us on and on. We are the people, the great people!"

He stepped toward her, and she shrank back. He was so big and strong and fierce-looking that she was afraid.

"Do I frighten you, little blue eyes?" he cried. "By all the little saints, you were made to love! Your eyes are as deep as the Caspian, and the braids of your hair were given to you to twist round the throat of a lover. What do these fools of Turks sing? Ah, I have it:

Allah gave man two things worth while,
A singing blade and a woman's smile.

"Ay, ay, ay! And I have a singing blade, a blade that my grandfather carried against the Turk in the Crimea when the fool British and French stopped us from running them out of Europe! And now, bright eyes, you must smile at me. You must smile on Yagof, who is called Little Yagof, but who is stronger than any other man in the regiment."

His big hands were stretched out to seize Cha-Cha. His eyes were alight with desire. His strong white teeth showed as the flame of lust passed over his fighting face.

"Little Cha-Cha come to me," he murmured. "Come to——"

He stopped and straightened himself quickly. From without came the sound of galloping hoofs, then the mad splatter of gravel as a horse was checked suddenly. Some one called "Captain Yagof!" in a loud voice, and Yagof sprang through the flap of the tent.

"Coming colonel!" he cried. "Coming!"

Cha-Cha, breathing quickly, stepped to the flap and, with one eye to a split in the canvas, looked and listened. The rider of the horse, a big, gray-haired man, whose breast was covered with decorations, hurled sharp orders at the captain, then rode off at a gallop, while Yagof rushed toward the road where a company of Cossacks were mounting hastily.

"Oh, oh," murmured Cha-Cha, speaking into the soft ear of the kitten, "the Turks are coming back to kill us! Oh, what shall we do?"

The noise which had preceded the coming of the galloping colonel was nothing to the tumult which followed. The earth quivered beneath the tread of galloping horses, big-throated guns coughed and roared, and a smoke-pall drifted across the plain. The fleeing Turk had turned and was battling hard with his pursuers.

NIGHT came down, and the tumult lessened. A white-faced moon came up, and Cha-Cha watching through the flap of the tent, saw the weary horsemen ride back to their camping-grounds. She watched for Yagof, her little heart beating madly.

He came at last, spurring his horse up the slope upon which her tent was erected. She saw him spring from his horse, refuse the food and drink which his servant offered, then, staggering like a drunken man, he dropped beside the fire, rolled himself in a rug and slept.

From the other fires came scraps of conversation which Cha-Cha pieced together. The Turks had turned, but the Russians had crushed their attack and they were again in full flight. And from the fires came stories of heroism, stories in which the name of Yagof figured. He had done wonderful things, and Cha-Cha thrilled as she listened.

From one fire nearest her tent there came

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an invitation for the captain. It grew into a full-throated roar. Five officers came running across the intervening space. They found the sleeping Yagof and tried to get him to his feet, but he cursed them roundly and begged them to leave him alone.

"He's tired," cried one, "and, by the beard of my father, it is right that he should be. He held the road with ten men against fivescore of them!"

"And he did more than the ten!" said another. "Ay, he did! When Little Yagof swings that big sword of his something happens!"

They went away, and Cha-Cha whispered the news to the kitten.

"He killed many men," she murmured. "He and ten others fought a hundred! A hundred!"

The shouting at the fires died away as the men one by one dropped off to sleep. From far away there came at intervals the boom of guns. A quick-given challenge was snapped out occasionally by sentries in the road.

Cha-Cha did not sleep. She crouched at the flap of the tent, watching Yagof who muttered in his sleep. Once he cried out and, straining her ears, she caught his words. He had spoken her name, spoken it distinctly. It had stayed with him through the great fight!

Hours passed. The kitten slept in Cha-Cha's arms, but the girl did not close her eyes. She watched Yagof, Yagof strong and fierce-looking, who with ten other men had fought a hundred.

It came midnight. A cold wind rose up and rustled the dead leaves of the trees, and Cha-Cha, listening to the wind, detected another sound. Some one was approaching, approaching quietly, furtively. Some one was crawling on hands and knees toward the big fair-haired giant sleeping by the fire.

Cha-Cha's little heart threatened to climb up in her throat and strangle her. She did not dare to breathe. Her big eyes searched the inky shadows that the moonbeams herded beneath the trees.

Cha-Cha saw. A man was crawling toward Yagof. An enemy surely. She saw his fez distinctly when he lifted his head to calculate the distance between himself and the sleeping giant. And Cha-Cha understood. The man crawling toward Yagof was one of the wounded Turks that had been brought into the camp after the fight.

Cha-Cha acted promptly. Still holding the kitten, she leaped through the flap and screamed loudly.

"Yagof!" she shrieked. "Yagof!"

The Turk rose to his feet and rushed as the big Russian flung the rug from him, but Cha-Cha was between the assassin and his intended victim. The girl threw out her hands to ward off the blow. There was a curious little animal cry of pain, a scream from the girl, then a quick grunt from the Turk as the Russian's sword fell upon him.

"Cha-Cha!" roared Yagof. "Are you hurt, little one? Are you hurt? Speak, girl! Speak!"

"He has killed my kitten!" wailed the girl. "He has killed my lucky kitten that the camel-boy gave me!"

It was as Cha-Cha said. In her anxiety to save Yagof she had thrust out her hands that held the sleeping kitten, and the dagger of the assassin had ended the life of the little pet.

Yagof swore softly, kicked the body of the dead Turk and gently soothed the weeping girl.

"Cha-Cha," he murmured, and there was a note of tenderness in his voice, "you lost the kitten but you saved me; so I am yours. Will you take me, Cha-Cha? There is a priest serving as a lieutenant in my company and if you say the word, Cha-Cha, he will marry us now. Little Blue Eyes speak to me! Speak!"

IT WAS dawn when the gray-haired colonel came galloping down the road. He caught sight of Yagof and Cha-Cha standing side by side near the little tent and his jaw tightened as he reined in his horse.

"Captain Yagof," he cried, "I gave an order regarding women——"

"My colonel," interrupted Yagof, saluting, "this lady is my wife. She saved my life last night when a wounded Turk tried to knife me as I slept. She is from Urmia where all women are beautiful. Please allow me to present her."

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The HARPOONER

by CAPTAIN A·E DINGLE

Author of "Blind Luck on St. Paul," "Square All 'Round."

"WANT any more?"

"No, —— your eyes! You've got me now, but I'll take my time and get you for this!"

The fight had been looming up all the cruise, and it came off at last after a weary day when the *Narwhal* had cut-in three whales. Tired and hungry men gladly allowed a smoking supper of doughnuts fried in whale oil to grow cold in order to watch that battle of giants; and now that the second mate, Radley, lay in a crumpled heap at the feet of Peters, the harpooner, the crowd moved regretfully toward the forecastle scuttle, sorry it was so soon over.

The harpooner stepped aside and walked aft, bent upon his own supper. The fight over, he was not the man to nurse the cause of it any further.

He had barely passed the try-works when a boy's shout of warning rang in his ears. He turned swiftly, glimpsed running figures, and vaguely saw his late antagonist fumbling at the fife-rail. Then a crushing blow on the head felled him, and he pitched headlong to the deck as an iron belaying-pin clattered against the brick base of the try-pots.

When Peters sat up, his head ringing like a released spiral spring, a mob of men surged around him, and in the middle they hustled and thumped Radley until he faced his victim.

Something of the fear of death clouded the second mate's scowling visage. He looked anxiously toward the poop as if he hoped for help to come from that direction. It was his own watch on deck; the other officers, harpooners, carpenter, and the rest of the afterguard were at supper. The poop was deserted except for the lone figure at the wheel. A growing rumble of anger among the men sent a shiver down his spine. Peters got up stiffly.

"Let him go, fellows," he said, looking hard into the eyes of Radley. "He'll remember what he's done after a bit, and he won't enjoy the smell of himself."

Both excellent whalemen, it was more professional jealousy than anything else that had set Radley and Peters by the ears. Nantucket had bred them both, and they held high records in the whalingest of whaling communities while sailing in separate ships. When their names appeared on the same set of articles, men but a scant week ashore after a four-year cruise flocked to join the *Narwhal* in anticipation of the rivalry that must ensue, and which promised much in the way of fat "lays" for all hands.

There was, too, a reason for Peters's refusal to exact penance for the second mate's treacherous attempt on him. So far as the actual fight was concerned, the big harpooner never had any doubt about his

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ability to handle Radley, or any man in the ship.

Radley was as big, and younger, his physical courage was undisputed, and in the strenuous day just done he had by sheer boatmanship and lance proficiency overcome the handicap of his own harpooner's indifferent work and placed a hundred-barrel bull whale to the ship's credit. That catch placed him on a level footing with Peters in the eyes of the crew, and the ship was in the Bonin grounds where the feathery jet of vapor from the chachalot's spiracle was as common a sight as sharks at cutting-in.

To complain to the skipper about that unseamanlike end to a sailorly scrap might mean that Radley would be disrated, for the *Narwhal's* skipper had his own downright ideas on man's dealings with man. He would not countenance man-handling on the part of the mates; a kick or a handspike visitation was unknown among the crew, though perhaps the skipper's methods of punishment hurt rather more; but he did insist that any two men with a grudge must hammer it out of each other by fair stand-up means as soon as it grew to a head. He was in the whaling business to make a quick competence, and a warring, simmering crew was a serious obstacle in his way.

There was no doubt that he would punish Radley's action by disrating him, and that must inevitably finish the rivalry that already had the ship divided into hot factions. There would be no chance of Peters losing his place at the head of the *Narwhal's* expert whalemen; nobody else was anywhere near Radley; no man could hope to overtake the big harpooner's lead.

And that was the great reason which prompted Peters to heap coals of fire on the second mate's head. He would not accept an advantage won by reason of another man's blind anger. He had made no mistake, either, when he said that Radley would not admire himself when he cooled off and remembered what he had done.

THE harpooner came on deck after supper, lighted his pipe at the galley and took his customary seat on the spare topmast in the port waterways. Here he always sat when neither on watch nor asleep. For one thing it was immediately beneath the davits of his own boat; for another thing it was also the resting place—when rest was possible—of his son, the youngster whose shout had warned him of the belaying-pin too late to dodge.

Here Peters strove daily to make a sailor and a whaleman of the boy, and success was coming. Already the young sapling promised to outgrow the parent tree. Wiry, whalebone and whipcord like his father, young Eph Peters already pulled number-two oar in the second mate's boat, and, but for the close rivalry between them and the mate's boat of which his father was harpooner, would have before now had his chance with the "iron."

"Yer head hurt much, dad?" asked Eph, sitting in his accustomed place.

"Don't hurt, son. My head's too blame tough to crack as easy as that. But you hollered too late. Might have missed me if I hadn't turned 'round. Forget it. How fur have ye got with them hitches an' knots?"

"I ain't done no hitches ner no knots this watch. What d'ye think I am? Think I kin fool with pieces o' rattlin' stuff an' whale-line while I'm thinkin' of that Radley dog? Just wait till we're fast to a whale. I'll let a hole through him wi' the spare harpoon!"

"If you do, son, I'll hang you up myself!" said Peters very slowly and very quietly. "You'll do your bit the same as always, and never forget that Mr. Radley's second mate o' this ship, an' officer in charge o' your boat. And you ain't going to forget that Mr. Radley and me's nip an' tuck fer high boat this cruise, an' I ain't going to have it said that my son helped me to beat his own boat by playin' the dog. Git on with your larnin' son, and likely you'll be a harpooner yet afore the cruise's up."

To a sailor composed of bone and red blood, humiliation hurts more than a score of husky physical wallopings, and Mr. Radley was a man of that kind. He took his supper alone, undergoing all the bitterness of self-reproach. It was not in him to immediately realize the true sportsmanship underlying Peters's refusal to make capital out of the flying belaying-pin; rather it seemed to him a deliberate assertion of superiority on the part of an inferior. The idea obsessed him, until long before a wakeful watch below was up he had taken to himself the rôle of the aggrieved party, and his mood was one of surly, smoldering anger, wholly foreign to him in his normal condition.

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Thus, when the skipper saw him in the early morning, for the first time since the combat, and demanded to know the cause of his battered and bruised face, Radley told part of the story only, and that part calculated to arouse sympathy toward himself and official displeasure toward Peters. He avoided any mention of the nasty part he had played after the real fight was over; his mumbled, involved relation of the occurrence led the skipper to believe that the harpooner had led the whole watch, or more particularly Peters's boat crew, in an unprovoked attack upon him.

Fully aware of the intense rivalry between the two men, the skipper was inclined to attribute the whole thing to that cause and to judge any such offense as leniently as possible. But, being human, he could not help being influenced slightly by the first version of the story told to him. The other man's version would have to be strongly stated to overcome first impressions. Besides, Mr. Radley was second officer of the ship; Peters was only a member of the afterguard, ex officio as it were by reason of being a harpooner.

"We'll settle this matter in the forenoon watch, Mr. Radley," the skipper said. "You were saying that young Peters is almost ready to have a chance with the 'iron,' weren't you?"

"He's as fit right now as his father is, sir," returned Radley, his eagerness cropping out in spite of himself.

"Then maybe we'll shift your harpooner into the mate's boat, and give the youngster his chance with you. If this business started as you say it did, it won't do any harm to give Peters a lesson by keeping him on board the ship next time we lower away."

IN WHALER fashion the captain and mates ate breakfast at a first table, the harpooners, carpenter, sailmaker, and cooper coming into a second sitting when the others were through. The ship was under cruising rig, jogging serenely through the placid waters of the northwestern Pacific with three lookouts aloft, the tension of momentary expectation pervading all hands.

The smell of whale was in the air. The fires under the trypots were never cold for many daylight hours together on the Bonin grounds.

During the first breakfast an unwonted restraint settled upon the officers, the first and third mates being entirely at a loss to account for it; and some of the feeling remained when the second gang came below, but in their case every man was at a loss to explain the queer sensation. For once the meal was dispatched quickly and in an awkward silence, and as soon as might be each man returned to his duties.

Harpooners overhauled irons and lines, seeing that the harpoons were ready to hand in the crotch on the starboard bow of their boats, assuring themselves that each tub of line was snugly coiled ready for running. Seamen looked to oars, to make quite sure that none had been cracked or sprung in the previous day's service.

Peters worked over a bent and twisted soft iron harpoon head by the forward crane of his boat; young Eph, to his wondering surprise, was given a similar job at his own boat, right across the deck from his father.

From time to time the youngster glanced across as if unable to restrain his impatience to impart his great hope to his parent. Everything pointed to his getting the chance he had dreamed of, the hurling of his first harpoon at a living target.

The carpenter made the rounds of the boats, handing each harpooner the deadly bomb-lance that is reserved for dire extremity. This horribly efficient weapon, when hurled into the side of the whale, nearly always means the end of the chase; for a charge of explosive is carried in the head, a trigger is set which is tripped by the whale's own skin on entering, and in an instant an eruption takes place inside the leviathan that rarely misses a vital part.

Peters had the old whaleman's dislike for such a weapon. He infinitely preferred to turn his fish fin-out by the orthodox methods, and used the deadly tool under silent protest.

Aft on the short poop the mates were clustered, looking at each other inquiringly, and from each other to the companionway by which the skipper must emerge from the cabin. It was apparent that something was afoot apart from the daily routine, and Radley revealed his cognizance of the business by his nervous aloofness.

Presently the skipper stepped out of the companionway, spoke to his officers, and immediately the mate roared out:

"All hands muster aft! Bear a hand

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now!" and evinced utter astonishment at his own order.

Blankly the men looked at each other as they trooped aft and clustered in a milling mob at the break of the poop. Young Peters alone grinned, for he was now certain that promotion was afoot, and he blushed boyishly at the thought that he was the most likely candidate, else why had he been told off to do a harpooner's job. Who the unlucky man to be disrated was bothered him but little.

Peters hung on the edge of the crowd, still fingering his harpoon-head, as mystified as his mates at the unheard of departure from sea custom. Neither punishment, promotion, nor any other matter of ship's business that he knew of called for a muster of all hands at two bells in the forenoon watch on the whaling grounds. There was never time for such things; even at that moment any or all of the three look-outs might set the ship in a frenzy of action by a long-drawn "Blo-oo-ow, ah blo-oo-ow!"

"Men," began the captain, holding up a hand, "an assault has been committed by one officer on another. Those men who saw the trouble from the beginning, stand over to starboard; the rest may carry on with their jobs."

The men who had seen the fight—and they numbered the entire ship's company forward except the helmsman—shuffled uneasily and looked disconcertedly at the officers. Radley's bruised face flushed a shade deeper beneath the tan, and he avoided the men's direct gaze.

Peters started as the words were uttered, and an angry flush suffused his powerful countenance while he sharply scrutinized every man around him. To him, the captain's speech meant that some busybody had carried the tale of the second mate's hot-headed and unmanly act right to the fountain of authority, and he boiled at the thought.

He flashed a glance at young Eph, recalling the youngster's heated talk; but Eph looked as surprised as the rest, though he could not and did not try to hide his pleasureable anticipation of promotion. What puzzled the boy was; who was to be disrated for his benefit? Then, suddenly, through his mind flashed the joyful thought that Radley was to be punished, thanks to the unknown tale-carrier, and one of the harpooners would be moved up into the place of the third mate, who, of course, would fill Radley's vacant berth. The harpooner could scarcely be any other than his father, and he, Eph, would achieve his ambition of filling the old man's shoes to complete the family triumph.

"Now men, shake a leg," repeated the skipper impatiently, for not a man had moved over. "I want the men who manhandled Mr. Radley. If I have to find them out myself, I shall make their punishment something to remember. Step out now."

If the crowd were uneasy before, they were stupefied now. Dumbly, with open mouths, they stared at the harpooner, who in turn stared in utter unbelief in his own ears at the skipper.

Not a man there but had guessed he was expected to bear witness against the second mate; truly, their only scruple would be that Peters did not want the unpleasant business known to the captain at all. But "The men who had man-handled Mr. Radley!" And they were to be punished! That put another complexion on the matter, and a deep growl rumbled around the crowd.

Peters, still dumfounded, fingered his harpoon nervously and started toward the ladder, bound to have his doubts set right.

"Stay down there, Peters!" the skipper said, and extended a flat palm toward the ladder.

The growl threatened to burst into furious remonstrance at the obvious twist the skipper had gotten into his yarn. The two men who had led in hustling Radley after the belaying-pin left his hand stepped aside and began calling off names of those who had so willingly lent a hand. The muttering subsided; a heavy silence hung over the clustered men in the waist. Then, pipe-like and clear, far overhead, from fore and main crow's-nest simultaneously rang the electrifying hail—

"A-ah blo-oo-ow!"

"Where away?" The skipper's mind was set on whales now; not all the black eyes and bruised noses in the whaling industry could distract his attention from his legitimate business.

"Lone bull down to th' sou'west!"

"Lower away!" pealed the order, given by the skipper and echoed by the first mate as that important officer sprang to his own boat.

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If but one boat were to be lowered, it must be his, of course. Peters swiftly clapped his iron on to the shaft and leaped to the bulwarks in readiness.

"You'll stay aboard this time," the skipper called to the chief mate. "Mr. Radley and the third mate will be enough; you will be third boat, if it's wanted."

For a moment the mate looked aggrieved; then he grinned. If he always had gone out with his own boat, he would have been in the contest for high catch, and on a level with his harpooner; but the skipper sometimes took a notion to chase a whale himself, and on those occasions he replaced the mate.

So, while Peters always went along to hurl the harpoon, only a percentage of the boat's catch fell to the credit of the chief mate. Therefore it was only his pride that suffered a little when he was ordered to stay for possible third boat. Peters saw the order from a different angle. He had refrained from taking advantage of Radley's mean action, from a sportsman's motive; he saw the result now. The second mate had not felt the same scruples.

Peters stood moodily watching the chase from the bulwarks by his boat, cold rage in his heart. The mate walked aft with a philosophical air and took the place of the skipper who was on his way aloft with binoculars to watch and direct the chase.

The boats had sailed on leaving the ship, and as long as the sails were visible it was evidence that they had not yet got fast to the whale. Then first one sail was lowered and rolled up, and in a few minutes the other followed, and Peters's interest in the boats smothered his personal feelings. He glanced aloft to the main crow's-nest and saw the skipper intently watching the maneuvers of the boats.

Presently a hail carried down, and the mate sprang to alert attention.

"Lower away!" ordered the skipper. "The third mate's in trouble!"

Peters hesitated while the boat's crew jumped to the tackles.

"In with you!" cried the mate, springing into the stern-sheets of the boat, and the harpooner silently took his place.

"Shove off! Give way!" And the boat was thrust clear while a couple of hands stepped the mast and set the spritsail.

Away she sped, and the breeze that was barely sufficient to move the sluggish old whaleship heeled the boat down to the rail and drove her through the sparkling seas with a boiling spout of spray at her stem.

"What's the trouble, Peters?" sang out the mate, as the first two boats rose into plainer view.

"Fighting whale, sir! Third mate's boat's busted, and Radley looks to have his hands full."

"Better have the bomb-lance handy then. That's the stuff for mean whales!" advised the mate, and edged his boat a bit to windward.

THE whale sounded just as the harpooner caught a glimpse of his black bulk, and the boat was luffed to stop her way until the place where he reappeared was discernible. Then the tub-oarsman sang out:

"There's the third mate's boat, down to loo'ard, sir. She's awash, and there's some men hanging onto her!"

The helm was shifted, and the boat buzzed down to assist, but the third mate was a real whaleman and could endure several more hours in the water if only the whale that put him there were safely ironed.

"We're all right for a while," he hailed. "Better get fast, or you'll lose him. Radley ain't got him yet!"

"Blo-oo-ow!" shouted Peters, with an arm outflung toward the far side of the second mate's boat.

The blunt snout of an enormous cachalot rose from the water, and in a moment it was plain that Radley had an iron in him, for the boat gradually pulled up closer to the whale.

Then Peters's announcement that it was a fighting whale was amply justified. Without warning, gathering way like a torpedo boat, the whale charged fair at his tormentor and the chief mate's crew held their breath.

Peters fixed his eyes upon a slight, springy figure in the bows of the threatened boat, and his grim face relaxed. Eph bent to his bow oar like a veteran; the onrush of the murderous cachalot left him as cool as even his father and mentor could have wished him to be.

A wild shout of warning pealed out as the boat backed off and let the whale charge by a scant oar's length away. The slackened whale-line fouled the oars. Eph's ash loom was flung high in the air, and the youngster himself was hurled over the side

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of the steeply heeling boat, a turn of the line about his shoulders.

Stoic that he was, Peters uttered no sound, simply flashing a look of appeal to his officer. Then he straightened up and stared at the scene of disaster with incredulous eyes.

As the writhing line snatched Eph from his thwart, seemingly to certain death, Radley left his hold on the steering oar, seized the boat-knife, and in a flash dived straight into the swirling froth that surged over the boy's disappearing form. The boat, heeling giddily to the strain of the snarled line, suddenly righted; the line hung down slack; then two heads broke water together, and a howl of defiance to the whale burst forth as four pairs of steel-muscled arms hauled Eph and Radley aboard.

The thing had taken little time. The men were back at the oars, as if nothing uncommon had happened, when a shot from the mate's boat warned them that the whale was coming again. It was high time to step in if the mate was to strike a blow, and he set his oars in motion.

"Great Jonah! See that thar' whale!" gasped the bowman, glancing over his shoulder.

Again the furious whale bore down on the second mate's boat, and Radley stood up to take a desperate chance with the lance. But the cachalot has a frontal piece impervious to the sharpest blade. The long lance struck, fell back into the water, and in an instant the great blunt head crashed into the boat, smashing it to loose staves and tossing all hands broadcast.

"Give way! Oh, crack your backs!" urged the mate, and a running string of encouraging expletives came through the clenched teeth of Peters, himself a cracking, swollen-veined bunch of straining sinew.

Once more the whale turned and charged at the fragments of the boat and burst among the planks and oars and swimming men like a mad bull through a paper fence. A malignant devil had taken charge of him and he sought out men from the wreckage with fiendish discernment.

Around him the sea rolled and tumbled, great clouds of spray wreathing him as in a mist. But through the mist objects flashed at intervals, and Radley could be seen, far-flung in the crash, now swimming frantically to get out of the track of the monster.

Skilfully maneuvering, the mate swept his boat around until the whale presented a fair mark for the harpooner. Then he saw what had been hidden before. On the whale's streaming back, hanging on desperately to the shaft of a planted iron, was young Peters, and his white face shone out like an ivory mask against the gleaming black hide.

"My God, Peters!" groaned the mate as the boat surged near. "You can't plant that bomb-lance without ——"

The harpooner looked round swiftly, and his grim face paled. The one comprehensive glance showed him Eph's body, covering the vital area of black skin beneath which beat the whale's mighty heart; showed him, much nearer, the agonized face of Radley, fair in the monster's path. And, while the picture flashed through his brain, he reformed that other picture, of a snarled line, a boat-knife, and a son snatched from death.

With silently moving lips, he stood erect in the bows, never waiting for the customary "Stand up and give it to him!" His knee was braced solidly against the thigh-board in the bows, the long, dynamite-headed bomb-lance was balanced in a hand as steady as a lighthouse. Intuitively the oars hung poised, ceasing their forward impulse, awaiting the order to back water which would come for lightning obedience in a moment.

"Can you? Oh, can you?" breathed the mate.

The harpooner gave no sign.

The rushing shape of the maddened whale flashed past the stem of the motionless boat. Ten fathoms in front of his wicked snout floundered Radley, breathless and weakened, and the fear of death was on his set face, yet he fought stubbornly in face of the end.

A hissing intake of the breath was heard as Peters stiffened; then like the javelin of fate his weapon was launched, fair at the vital spot of the whale. The iron sank deep into the massive side, six inches from Eph's body, and the ensuing explosion deadened the groan that burst from the harpooner.

"Starn—oh, starn all!" cried the mate, and the oars bit deep to back the boat out of the stricken whale's flurry. One oar was idle. Peters flung aside the coils of the lance warp, swept the churning waters with a swift scrutiny, and plunged overboard into the turmoil.

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"There's Mr. Radley, sir!" shouted the bowman, as the second mate's head emerged from the welter.

A sweep of the steering oar brought the boat round, and the spent and sickened officer was dragged into the boat. Every eye then fastened upon the mate in mute inquiry as he scanned the littered waters about the expiring whale for trace of Peters. There seemed no hope of Eph having escaped, for, with the stroke of the lance, the whale's flurry had started.

"There's Peters! And he's got Eph!" whooped the mate, but he added, beneath his breath, "What's left of Eph, I guess!"

Silently the oars moved again, and the harpooner was taken up, gasping painfully from bursting lungs. But there was a lot left of Eph, and it was but a moment before the harpooner was satisfied of the happy circumstance. Eph spoke to him. A wan smile flashed across Peters's face; then he turned to the gunwale and became deathly sick.

"I threw myself off when I saw that lance coming," explained Eph, when the mate had set a weft as a mark on the dead whale and the boat was pulling away to pick up the third mate and his crew. "Mighty close, 'twas, though. I felt that ol' whale heave up!"

When the whale was fast alongside the *Narwhal*, and the crew went to dinner preparatory to commencing cutting-in, Peters sought out the skipper and made a request.

"Eph got fast to that fish, sir, and it wasn't his fault he didn't kill his first whale. The boy's got the stuff in him, and I want you to give him his chance right along now. Won't you let me change boats with him? I'd like to have him along with the mate until he's toughened a bit."

"You want to change into Mr. Radley's boat, eh?" mused the skipper, peering hard into the harpooner's face. "What's the idea? You don't want to start anything with him again, do you?"

"I never started anything with Mr. Radley, cap'n, and I'm not likely to after this day. I want to settle our differences for all time. We're about nose and nose on the catch now, and if we're both in the same boat we'll finish that way. Won't be any cause to start anything then."

The skipper nodded. He had heard from one of the ship-keepers while the boats were away the truth of the previous day's fight, and he had a suitable discipline in mind for the second mate. He was about to say so, when Radley came up with hand extended to Peters and a shamefaced smile on his face. The harpooner gripped that hand as if he meant what the grip implied, and the skipper turned away with a satisfied smile.

DESERT TRAILS

by **H. M. BEARDSLEY**

THE trails of the forest are blazed by the ax;
The trails of the mountains by stones;
The trails of the prairie by wagon tracks;
And the trails of the desert by bones.

Bones of burros, and cattle that strayed;
Bones bleached bright, and bones decayed;
Ribs of rustlers, ranchers, raiders;
Cows, and coyotes; tourists and traders.
Horses and horse thieves, side by side;
The tenderfoot's skull by that of his guide;
Bones of greasers, and gunmen, and mules;
Freighters, fighters, preachers, and fools.

The trails of the forest are blazed by the ax;
The trails of the mountains by stones;
The trails of the prairie by wagon tracks;
And the trails of the desert by bones.

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SIXTEEN to ONE on FRIDAY

by W·C·TUTTLE

Author of "A Bull Movement in Yellow Horse," "Fifty-fifty With Bonnie," etc.

BACK in the dim and distant past, when a certain silvery-voice orator, later known as the "Grape-juice Spellbinder," as pired to the highest rung of the political ladder, one of the certain advertising mediums to invade the peaceful atmosphere of Montana was a gloom-dispelling brand of whisky, labeled, "Sixteen to One."

Its platform was purity and its punch was prodigious. Having more exhilarating qualities than the ordinary mixture of alcohol, copperas, alkali water and chewing tobacco, it gained a certain renown, and was in great demand among the gentry of the range.

A certain saloonkeeper of Paradise, christened Charles Emmett Brady, and known socially as "Hip Shot," made a specialty of this brand. Hip Shot was not so named for his ability to shoot from the hip. A greaser with too much whisky under his burnt-umber-tinted skin decided to hold pistol-practise in front of Hip Shot's mirror. The shooting was good, only the greaser didn't happen to be facing the mirror, and Hip Shot got the bullet in his hip —hence the name.

Hip Shot peddled politics with his hooch. He would put a bottle of the above-named beverage on the bar, square back from it with his left hand shoved in above the fifth button of his greasy vest, wave his free hand in a sweeping gesture, and proclaim:

"Thar she is, boys! Th' nectar of th' gods and Willyum Jennin's. Long may she wave. Hurrah fer Free Silver! Drink hearty, cause th' cellar's full."

But it wasn't always full. One morning Hip Shot wended his wabbling way to his place of business, only to find his cellar empty. Some one had broken in the back door, looted his cellar, and all that was left was an empty whisky-barrel, and nailed to this barrel was a large piece of cardboard, with this inscription written thereon in six-inch letters:

HURRAW FOR McKINLEY

Out back of the saloon was the tracks of a mule team and a wagon, but these were lost where they turned into the traveled road. Hip Shot mourned his loss all the rest of his life. Not so much the loss of the whisky, but the unlimited gall of the person who printed that card got under Hip Shot's tough skin.

The rest of this tale must be told by Shiner Seymour, as he sat tilted back in the shade of Frenchy Burgoyne's stage-station and carved out a new bridge for his mandolin.

NO, YUH see, me and Friday McGovern wasn't what you'd exactly call desperate characters. Uh course his name wasn't Friday no more than mine's Shiner. He jist happened to come to work

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fer th' Bar B on that day of th' week, and we was plumb out uh nicknames. We had somebody named fer every day of th' week except Sunday, and, rememberin' th' teachin's of our youth, we aims to keep that day holy by leavin' it off our list. They used to call them six th' "Week Bunch," but there wasn't nothin' weak about th' Bar B in th' year 1904.

Friday McGovern was about six feet tall, red hair, mustache like uh greaser and uh chin like th' King of Spain. He only had one vanity—small feet. He allus tried to git his number tens into number nine boots.

Friday's been makin' reg'lar trips to Paradise, and I has my suspicions that there's uh girl in th' case. Them suspicions git stronger when I finds Friday soakin' his new boots in th' hoss-trough to make 'em soft-like.

I never could find out why they calls this town Paradise. If it resembles in any way th' place what th' sky pilots tells us about, I can do th' rest of my sinnin' with uh satisfied conscience.

One noon Friday comes to me and orates that he'd like to speak privately to me.

"Shiner," sez he, "I wants yuh to do me uh favor. Will yuh?"

I tells him that I'm willin' to do anythin' in th' favor line from lendin' him money to takin' uh shot at th' sheriff.

"Th' first I've got uh plenty," he states; plenty meanin' about forty dollars. "But I may desire th' last."

"Meanin' that yuh wants me to go gunnin' fer Sheriff Wilmot?"

"Not right at first, Shiner," sez he. "Yuh see, it's thisaway. I'm in—uh—I'm aimin' to marry his daughter, Matilda."

"Uh-huh," sez I. "Yuh desires that I remove th' barrier to yore future happiness. Does th' ol' man object that hard, Friday?"

"Danged if I know. I writes him uh letter day afore yesterday, in which I states my desires and I proclaims to appear this evenin' and fix up th' details with him. Will yuh go with me, Shiner?"

"Why don't yuh go right up to him and say, 'Mister Wilmot, I desires yore daughter in wedlock.' Jist like that?"

"Because I knowed that—well, dog-gone it, Shiner, uh letter is th' best I figgers. It sorta gives uh feller time to cool off. *Sabe?*"

"How does Matilda feel toward yuh, Friday?" I asks.

"Oh, her! She ain't got nothin' agin' me that I knows of. Will yuh go with me?"

I been sorta gittin' in uh rut, layin' around th' ranch and I kinda hankers fer action, so I tells him I'm happy to be of any use on earth. We saddles up uh li'l later on and pilgrims down toward his heart's desire.

WE'RE about three miles from Paradise, ridin' along slow-like, when we sees ol' Sheriff Wilmot and three other men ridin' toward us, and every one of them are packin' uh rifle loose in their hands.

Friday don't ask no foolish questions. He swings his bronc around and throws in th' spurs, and li'l Shiner is right with him. As we dips into uh dry gully, I feels th' wind from uh bullet fan my cheek, but we're goin' so fast that th' report never irritates our ear-drums.

We burns up th' earth fer about three miles to th' south fork of th' Li'l Muddy, where we loses our friends in th' willers in th' bottom. We swims our broncs across and cuts into th' breaks of th' west side. I don't remember of uh word bein' spoken since th' first shot is fired, but as we slides off our smokin' broncs, Friday inhales deep-like on his cigaret and wipes th' sweat off his manly brow.

"My Gawd!" sez he, sad-like. "I don't believe that ol' man Wilmot likes me."

"Well," sez I, "mebby he don't, but if he don't he's shore tryin' almighty hard to git somethin' he don't like."

"It ain't right," wails Friday, "jist because he don't cotton to my love proposition ain't no reason fer him to git up uh posse to hunt me down. Danged ol' fossilized, sheep-faced——"

"Don't! Remember, Friday, he's her father. No matter how full uh holes he shoots yuh, he's still her father."

"It's real nice of yuh, Shiner," sez he, "to tell me to remember. I ain't that danged absent-minded."

"Now that we understand each other," sez I, "and while th' fond parent is still lookin' in th' willers for his future son-in-law like Pharaoh's daughter, suppose yuh tell me what you figger on doin'."

"Me? I'm goin' right back to see my Matilda."

"Yore Matilda! Dog-gone it all, Friday, don't yuh know when you ain't wanted? Yore Matilda! Cripes!"

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Friday picks up his reins and climbs back into his saddle.

"Shiner," sez he, "I've got to see her before I know whether I'm wanted or not, ain't I? Mebby th' ol' man don't want me, but yuh got to figger I ain't goin' to marry him."

"Did yuh ever ask Matilda?" I asks, as I forks my bronc.

"Well, not exactly, but I've come so danged near it, Shiner, that if she's got any *sabe* a-tall she's plumb wise that I'm matrimonial inclined toward her."

We pilgrims down th' west side, and by th' time we swims our broncs across th' river it's plumb dark. I'm glad it is 'cause I don't hanker none to be seen in Friday's company—not by th' sheriff.

We circles th' town and rides slow up to Wilmot's gate.

"You stay out here, Shiner," sez he. "Yell if yuh need help. I'm goin' in to see where I stands."

There's uh lamp burnin' in th' front room, and I can hear Matilda playin' "Lead, Kindly Light" on th' organ. Friday has gone around to th' back door, and pretty soon th' "Kindly Light" flickers out, and I hears voices sorta dronin' like behind th' house.

Friday comes sneakin' back in about five minutes and gits back on his bronc. He looks over toward th' town and then "Come on," sez he, and he leads me out into th' dark, away from Paradise and further from our downy beds at th' Bar B. Th' lights of th' town die out before he pulls up his hoss and looks back.

"Shiner," sez he sorta sad-like, "what color is yore bronc?"

"My bronc? Th' one I'm ridin'?"

"Uh-huh."

"Pinto, yuh color-blind maverick!"

"What's mine?"

"Light sorrel."

"And you packs uh .38 six-gun?"

"Uh-huh."

"My Gawd! Lissen, Shiner. Early this afternoon th' Wind River stage was held up by two fellers who rode uh pinto and uh light sorrel. One uh them shoots Mike Evans, th' driver, three times with uh .38. Nobody at th' Bar B knows when we left there. They answers our descriptions. Wore masks of course."

"Why worry?" sez I. "We didn't do it, Friday."

"Thanks," sez Friday. "That's cheerin' news, Shiner, but it won't put no ray of light into my soul if I has to stand on nothin' and look up uh rope. When mornin' comes we shore got to be uh long ways away from here, and I knows jist th' place to go. Remember that li'l cabin we found hid away in th' brush at th' head of Blue Joint Cañon? I'll bet that ol' man Wilmot never heard of it, and we won't starve either."

"How do yuh know we won't? There ain't nothin' to eat there."

Friday laughs and tells me to come on.

IT'S daylight when we angles around th' head of th' cañon and rides up to th' cabin. This li'l cabin shore is cached away. Yuh has to almost stumble on it before yuh finds it, and if yuh stand on th' roof yuh can see th' railroad what connects Paradise with th' civilized world. Th' track is about two miles away.

We unsaddles and puts our broncs in th' corral behind th' cabin and goes inside. I'm hungry enough to eat th' bark off uh tree.

"I reckon th' stuff is still here," grins Friday.

He walks to th' back of th' cabin and begins to take up uh section of th' puncheon floor. It's dark in th' place but we can see that there is sort of uh cellar.

Friday gits down on his knees and pokes under th' floor. He gits hold of uh box which falls apart some easy, but he gits it out on th' floor where it busts up complete, disclosin' twelve quarts of whisky! "Bottled in Bond, Spring of 1896. SIXTEEN TO ONE."

Friday stares at th' bottles fer uh minute and then digs deeper into th' cellar. More hooch. Box after box he unearths until our cabin looks like th' storeroom of uh booze factory. Th' last thing he brings up is uh keg uh brandy, th' same of which he uses fer uh chair, and rolls uh smoke.

"Well," sez I, "while I appreciates yore hospitality, Friday, you shore misunderstood me if yuh thought I said I was dry. I said I was hungry enough to——"

"Huh!" he grunts. "Don't try to be sarcastic when yore surrounded by spirits, Shiner. Any outlaw what packs uh .38 gun ain't noways fit to despise real likker."

"'Pears to me it's open season on sarcasm," I replies. "When did you steal all this hooch?"

Friday rolls another cigaret and knocks

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th' top off uh bottle. He does uh li'l stargazin' and wipes his lips.

"That ain't so awful bad, Shiner—help yoreself. I never stole anythin'. I'll tell yuh how I knows about this cache. When I was over to Helena this Spring I runs across an ol' jasper who used to *sabe* this range uh heap. Strongest Republican I ever heard talk politics. One evenin' after he recites th' tariff and th' Congressional Record into my willin' ear, we gits to talkin' about this country, and I tells him about this cabin. I remarks that it would make uh dandy hangout fer rustlers. He listens deeply, and after I gits through he says: 'If yuh ever are in real need, go to that cabin and take up th' floor at th' rear. There's uh fine cache uh canned goods and yore welcome to it.' Dog-gone it, I thought he meant grub, Shiner."

"Oh, well," sez I satisfied-like, pryin' th' cork out of uh fresh bottle, "he meant well and I forgives him for makin' uh misleadin' statement. I don't seem to hanker fer eats now."

Right that evenin' I forms uh strong friendship fer Friday McGovern. I loves him like uh brother. In fact I'm so attached to him that I sleeps with my head on his bosom.

It was th' grayest mornin' I ever saw. There's uh strong smell of hooch in th' cabin, and I seems to have accumulated uh headache and uh feelin' of extreme lassitude. Friday wakes up and announces that his feelin's runs mine uh dead heat.

"Shiner," sez he sorta sad-like, "I know now jist how my ol' daddy used to feel. I used to laugh when he gits up in th' mornin' and can't seem to locate his mouth."

"You tells me oncet that yore daddy was uh preacher," sez I.

"Ke-rect. I'm speakin' now of when he was on his vacation. Father was what you'd call uh human bein'. Will yuh have uh li'l snifter uh booze fer an appetizer, Mister Seymour?"

Not havin' anythin' to eat, we decides to drown our hunger. My appetite goes down fer th' third time inside one quart, and in uh short time we're recountin' our trials and tribulations with great cheer.

"I wonder if Daddy Wilmot is still pokin' around in th' willers fer his prospective son-in-law?" laughs Friday. "Also I wonder if Matilda——"

"Lissen, Friday. If I was you I'd go light on that booze. Bein' in love thataway uh feller is liable to overestimate his capacity. Thinkin' of Matilda sorta makes yore heart come up in yore throat, and gives that much more room fer yore stummick. When yore insides git back to normal yuh finds yoreself fuller than uh wood-tick."

"Tha's so," he agrees, solemnly. "I—uh—cripes, Shiner, I jist remembers that them broncs been out there in that ol' corral all night without uh bite to eat. I reckon I better see about 'em, eh? Goo' ol' light sorrel."

Friday weaves out of th' door and around th' corner, but he don't no more than git out uh sight before I hears him grunt "My Gawd!" and he's right back in like uh prairie-dog dodgin' uh bullet. He leans agin' th' door fer uh minute and then reaches over and gits uh full bottle uh hooch.

Smash! That perfectly good likker splashes over th' floor and he reaches fer another bottle. I beats him to it and grabs him by th' vest.

"What's th' matter?" I asks.

"Gosh A'mighty!" he mumbles, tryin' to git loose, and reachin' fer another bottle. "Smash all of it, Shiner! Don' drink 'nother drop! Jis' saw uh-uh geewhinkus!"

"You recognizes it to be such?" I asks.

"Absolut'ly. Thish is fiersh. Geewhinkus is comin' 'round th' head of th' cañon, and when he sees me he shoves out his ears and——"

"Does it usually carry 'em outa sight?" I asks. "Set down and let th' pain-killer alone while Uncle Fuller classifies said animile. I'd admire to see uh geewhinkus—me."

I walks outside and goes half-way around th' corner and—then I ambles right back again. I wasn't gone long.

Sufferin' caterpillars! What I seen was uh plenty. Right on th' bank of that cañon stands uh critter that nothin' but uh disordered mind could conceive. There's about seventeen feet uh spotted neck stickin' out of uh mesquite, and when it sees me it leans forward like th' crane of uh steam-shovel. Did I stop to classify it? I did not!

"Yuh—yuh sees it too, eh?" whoops Friday, puttin' his arms around my neck and rubbin' his long nose in my ear.

"Too!" I snorts, breakin' th' clinch. "Why dog-gone it, Friday, you didn't see nothin'! Put that bottle down! What yuh tryin' to do—start uh mee-nagerie?"

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"Well," sez Friday, grinnin' like uh half-breed, "I'm glad yuh saw it. Now yuh can't say I was lyin'."

"Friday, you ain't got enough imaginations to do uh good job uh lyin'. Geewhinkus! Dad-bust it, Friday McGovern, don't you know uh speckled whangdoodle when yuh sees one?"

"That whisky must be mixed. I states without reservations that what I sees wasn't uh whangdoodle, and moreover and otherwise, Shiner, it wasn't speckled—it was striped."

Jist then we hears uh rattle of busted poles at th' back of th' cabin, uh bronc squeals sorta hysterical-like, and we rushes to th' door. Right past th' cabin comes uh pinto hoss and uh light sorrel, and they seems to consider th' case some urgent. We watches 'em out uh sight and looks foolishly at each other.

"Oh, lovely!" sez Friday, cryin' on my bosom. "All th' world seems brighter and th' flowers are singin' and—don't yuh git it, Shiner? There goes th' evidence."

"Yes," sez I, "I git it. I also gits th' first-hand information that it's about two days' walk back to th' dinin'-room of th' Bar B. Th' birds shore are in bloom, Friday. Go and do yore cryin' in th' water-bucket."

"Walkin'," pronounces Friday, "don't appeal to my finer sensibilities, but I'd rather have blisters than hemp pizen."

We goes back in th' cabin and sets down. Friday aims to set down on his private brandy-keg, but his sights are uh li'l off and he misses it by uh foot. He rolls uh cigaret and ponders deeply before he thinks out loud—

"I wonder if my Matilda is thinkin' of me now."

"I hope so," sez I. "Not wishin' her any bad luck, but it wouldn't seem right fer uh nice-lookin' feller like you to not have somebody thinkin' of him."

"Uh-huh," agrees Friday. "I feels that in th' great game of love I'm—my Gawd!"

When Friday starts that sentence I sees his eyes git bigger and bigger and his voice trails off to uh li'l squeak, and his con-cludin' exclamation was like uh whisper in church.

I turns and looks to see what he's starin' at. There's uh li'l window at th' rear of th' cabin, th' glass of which is long departed, and somebody has made uh li'l door with strap hinges which opens from th' inside.

That door is open, and th' dangdest-lookin' face in th' whole world is lookin' into our bood-wah. I can't describe jist what it looks like to me. Th' under lip of th' thing appeals to me more than any other feature, and I reckon it did to Friday, too, 'cause after uh good long look he turns to me and foolishly remarks—

"Anything with uh droop like that ought to wear suspenders." And then he comes to himself and starts to git scared.

Th' longer he looks at th' animule th' wider his eyes git, and his long chin dangles to th' top button of his vest. Finally he can't stand it no longer. He lets out uh whoop that would win him a head-dress in th' Piegan tribe, and goes through the front door like uh shot.

I quits makin' faces at th' monstrosity in th' window long enough to observe Friday's movements. He lights on his knees, slides along fer uh spell, and then lights back on his feet at th' side of his geewhinkus. Honest to grandma! Talk about uh wolf in sheep's clothing. This looks to me like uh burro in tiger's clothing.

I reckon if uh man gits scared enough he'll tackle anythin', cause when Friday lands on his feet and sees that convict jackass beside him, he jist lets out another of them yelps and forks th' blamed thing.

Mebby it was th' critter of uh delerious brain, but jist th' same Friday locks his long legs around that striped belly and away they goes, buckin' and bawlin' down th' side of th' cañon.

I ROLLS uh cigaret and ponders deep on th' failin's uh mankind. Not too deep, 'cause nobody can git their thoughts connected with uh face like that lookin' on, so I hits it dead center with uh quart uh Sixteen to One and shuts th' window.

Mebby I'd have been better off if I'd have shut th' door first, cause when I turns around, there stands th' same animile or its mate lookin' in th' door.

Mebby I was as scared as Friday was or mebby I jist lost my head, 'cause th' next thing I knowed I was outside and runnin' long side of th' thing. Not carin' much for th' manly art of foot-racin', I manages to git uh holt on th' critter's neck and climbs aboard.

It's like tryin' to stick on uh steer with

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uh pack on his back. Some of th' time I'm up on its long neck, and then I takes uh trip to th' rear, behind th' hump, but no matter where I rode we went some. Th' shifts didn't seem to bother it none. I never rode anythin' with uh gait like that. Feels to me like uh pacin' hoss with th' blind staggers.

I reckon we're gone about uh mile down th' cañon when I unloads. Yuh see, I was on th' observation end when this hang-lipped animile decides to hit uh curve, and I don't curve a-tall.

"Aw-revoah!" sez I, as I hits th' edge of uh clay-bank and sprawls gracefully to th' bottom.

"And — Satan came also," quotes uh voice, and I looks up to see Friday on th' other side of th' pit, diggin' clay out of his ears. He's uh sight.

"Seems to be uh popular stoppin'-place," sez I. "Where's yore geewhinkus?"

Friday quits diggin' long enough to grin and state:

"That blasted penitenchery mewl has went. Fer high and handsome buckin' I takes off my hat to that thing, Shiner. Either I'm drunk as uh hoot-owl or I've rode th' buckinest thing ever foaled. I sticks like uh man until it starts pinwheelin'. It hops into th' air and turns over four times, and I'm there unto th' third revolution. This clay-pit was handy but nasty."

"I reckon yore drunk, Friday," I states. "Th' thing I rides didn't have to buck. Th' gait of th' thing was worse than any bucker on earth. Nothin' on th' earth could have stuck on if it wants to buck."

"Uh-huh," sez Friday, rollin' uh smoke. "I reckon we're both drunk. There was too blasted much politics distilled in that stuff. I'm goin' to climb right out uh this place and see if I can find—git down! Here comes th' posse."

We climbs up and peeks over th' edge of th' pit and sees some riders comin' up through th' mesquite. We can't see how many. We slides down to th' bottom and hugs th' bank. We hears 'em comin' along and they swings into th' thick brush above our hidin'-place.

All to oncet we hears 'em stop suddenlike, and then one uh them yells "Holy smoke!" And then th' convention is called to order.

Bim! Blang! I hears two six-guns pop, uh bronc whistles like somebody was brandin' th' map of Texas on its hide, and then th' privacy of our li'l mud-pit is invaded.

I don't reckon that them broncs know about this clay-bank, but from th' way they piles over th' edge I don't reckon they cares uh lot either.

Me and Friday rolls as far as possible from th' strife, and after th' mud quits fallin' we gazes upon th' disaster. Over by th' far bank stands uh light sorrel hoss, with th' saddle under its belly, th' reins looped around its hind feet and uh wild look in its eyes.

Th' other bronc, which we decipher to be uh pinto, is on its side, half-way down th' bank, and is makin' good use of its wind and legs tryin' to slide th' rest of th' way.

One of th' riders is jack-knifed in th' bottom of th' pit and th' other is layin' flat on his back with his boots stickin' up th' bank. Sort of uh careless attitude.

Neither uh them riders is showin' signs uh life, so me and Friday rolls fresh smokes and deliberates. After awhile Friday walks over and picks uh gun out of th' mud. He looks it over and shoves it in his pocket.

"Thirty-eight," sez he. "I reckon we've captured th' bandits."

"Yes," I agrees, "we shore have. I reckon we ought to git medals fer our good work. It took uh lot uh schemin', Friday."

"Never look uh gift hoss in th' mouth, Shiner. That's what my ol' daddy said when th' bunch down to Maverick gives him twenty minutes to get out of th' place."

"Was he holdin' services there, Friday?"

"No, he—he was takin' his vacation. Yuh see, he—gosh, here comes some more folks!"

Somebody is comin' up th' gulch oh hosses, and from th' noise they're makin' they shore are in uh hurry. We tries to git up th' bank to flag 'em, but it's too slick and we jist skees back to th' bottom. Jist when I fills my lungs to yell out that we're down in th' washout, we hears some cussin' in about six different voices, and *Zowie!* uh bronc busts through th' mesquite, and before we has time to clear th' track we has another mess of man and hoss in th' bottom of our li'l clay-pit.

"Our popularity increases!" whoops Friday. "If this keeps up I'm goin' to have this pit platted and sell town lots." We hauls th' rider from under th' hoss, leans him up agin' th' bank and gloms th' clay

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out of his features. His eyes open and he stares at Friday.

"How's Matilda?" asks Friday.

"Tolable, Friday, tolable," sez ol' man Wilmot, th' sheriff. "What have I got into? I—er—huh"—He spits out uh chew of perfectly good moist clay and looks at th' other two on th' ground and at th' broncs. "Well, by th' ha'r on uh fool-hen, if there ain't th' pair of them! How'd yuh do it?"

"We'd rather not tell, eh, Shiner?" sez Friday. "Yuh see, Mister Wilmot, me and Shiner—well, there's th' men yuh want. We figgers that you'll be along pretty soon so we don't even tie 'em up."

Th' sheriff goes over and inspects th' pair. They're still in th' land of th' livin' but they ain't fussin' about it. We helps all th' live-stock on their feet and then sets down and enjoys uh smoke.

"Where's yore posse?" asks Friday.

"My posse! By th' ha'r on th'—huh, I plumb forgot 'em. We was all ridin' up th' cañon, and we figgers that we're on uh red-hot trail. All to oncet our hosses goes plumb loco at somethin'. I reckon it was uh bear. 'Pears to me that I was th' only one what was pointed this way. Yes sir, it must 'a' been uh bear."

"Shore," I agrees. "Must 'a' been, 'cause that's th' only thing in th' hills that would scare uh bronc thataway."

"Sheriff," sez Friday, "did yuh ever hear of whisky called 'Sixteen to One'?"

Th' ol' man scratches his head fer uh minute and then grins all over his face.

"Gosh!" sez he. "I shore have. Reminds me of Hip Shot Brady and his political orations. Boys, somewheres in these hills is uh hooch cache, and if anybody ever finds it they'll have one hy-iu time. I'll bet by this time that stuff would give uh man th' finest collection of animiles on earth. Where did you hear of Sixteen to One, Friday?"

"Yes, it shore would," agrees Friday, turnin' his face away and gazin' up th' cañon, "it would—oh, my daddy brought some. That is, he tol' me about it."

"His father was uh preacher," I explains.

"Name of McGovern?" asks Wilmot.

"No," sez Friday. "Yuh see, his folks didn't want him to be uh preacher so he traveled under another name. Different one in each town."

"Well," sez th' sheriff, "some people are queer thataway. I reckon we better tie these stick-up artists on their broncs and be on our way. You fellers can ride behind 'em—that is if th' broncs don't object."

"I never questions uh bronc's desires," states Friday.

"Me and Shiner can ride anything yuh can put uh rope on, can't we, Shiner?"

"Why qualify yore statement by sayin' 'ropes'?" sez I.

We ropes them fellers on their broncs, and climbs up with 'em. Uh course no self-respectin' bronc likes to carry two grown men, but there's too much weight to make buckin' uh pleasure so they gits plumb docile in uh few minutes. We tops th' far side of th' cañon and stops to look around, but there ain't nobody in sight.

"My posse is vanished," sez th' sheriff. "I reckon they all know th' way home, so we won't worry. I forgot to tell you boys that there's uh thousand dollars reward fer these two clay-spotted hombres. I reckon yuh won't have no trouble in collectin' it."

"Thanks," sez Friday. "How's Ma-til——"

"Tolable," grins Wilmot. "I comes near gittin' these two fellers last night. I surrounds 'em in th' willers up on th' south fork, but they gits away. I'm up there in th' cold all night. Dog-gone, I reckon if I'd have got sight of 'em I'd shore have punctured somebody. They has th' gall to ride right out in th' open, and not over three miles from Paradise. What do yuh know about that?"

"Hardened characters," I agrees, and Friday burns most all th' ha'r off one side of his dinky li'l mustache tryin' to smoke uh lighted match after he throws away his cigaret.

"Say, where's yore own hosses?" asks th' sheriff. "I never thought about them."

"I don't know," replies Friday, truthfully. "They wasn't camp broke and leaves us last night."

WE CUTS into th' wagon road about five miles from Paradise, and meets Barney Metcalf and Hugh Mercer, of th' Flying M outfit. They're dustin' along in uh buckboard, and stops to talk. We explains what we got with us and they congratulates us uh heap.

"We been over to Silver Bend," states Barney. "Left our rig in Paradise and pilgrims down there on th' train. We aimed

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to see th' circus, but th' danged thing got wrecked some place and ain't showed up yet. We had to come home. Anyway, it wasn't nothin' but a animile show."

"That's all," agrees Hugh. "But dad blast th' luck! I did want to see that one-humped camule, th' zeebray and that sixteen-foot ji-raff."

"Aw, them folks allus says they got somethin' they ain't," grumbles th' sheriff. "I never seen half th' things that they advertise in circuses."

"These people are re-liable," states Friday. "I know."

"Well, mebby," agrees Barney, gatherin' up his lines. "So-long, boys."

"Say," yells Friday, "where did yuh say that wreck was?"

"I didn't say," replies Barney, "but I hears that it's some place between Paradise and Silver Bend."

"Exactly," sez Friday.

We ambles along fer uh spell and then ol' man Wilmot sez:

"That makes me remember that Matilda tells me that you two fellers had gone down to see th' circus day before yesterday. She speaks of it late last night—or rather this mornin' early after I gits back from th' south fork."

"God bless—shore we did intend to," sez I, "but when we finds out that it's nothin' but a animile show we decides not to. Yuh see, sheriff, me and Friday ain't noways partial to animiles."

"Did yuh ever see uh geewhinkus or uh whangdoodle, sheriff?" asks Friday.

"Not to my certain knowledge, Friday. I've seen most everythin', drunk or sober, but I never seen th' things yuh mention," laughs th' sheriff.

"Was yuh ever almighty drunk?" asks Friday.

"Not so very," grins th' sheriff.

"Well," sez I, "you never seen 'em then."

We was dog-gone glad when we ambles into Paradise and down to th' li'l jail on th' outskirts of town. It ain't no cinch to ride behind uh saddle and hang on to uh half-dead outlaw, especially when yore so danged hungry yuh could eat th' horn off uh cow.

Th' prisoners don't seem to take no interest in th' trip a-tall, but jist as we gits in sight of th' jail th' one which I'm chaperonin' sorta comes to and looks me in th' face. He reaches up and picks out uh gob uh clay which is still stickin' in between his eye and his nose, rolls it in his fingers slow-like and then sez to me in uh sort of uh mumble—

"It had uh-uh-uh neck—twenty—feet long."

"Uh-huh," sez I. "Go back to sleep and don't worry. It can't bother yuh where yore goin'."

"I was sober, too," he whispers.

"Don't feel bad about it," I whispers right back at him. "I wasn't."

We puts them outlaws into th' jail and sends fer ol' Doc Milliken. Th' sheriff gives us th' broncs to ride home on and we starts out fer th' restaurant to make up fer lost time.

"Come down tomorrow, boys, and we'll fix up about that reward!" yells th' sheriff. "And also, Friday, yuh might come down and see how Matilda is yoreself. Haw! Haw! Haw!"

"Ain't he th' ol' cuss?" chuckles Friday, searchin' fer his sack uh smokin'. "Ain't he, Shiner? Dog-gone his ol' hide, I love him. Funny ol' cuss in his way, but I reckon we're all queer some ways. Foxy ol' feller, Shiner. Did yuh notice that he never mentioned gittin' that let—my Gawd!"

Friday has been friskin' all of his pockets fer that sack uh tobacco, and he happens to reach into th' inside pocket of his vest. He pulls out an envelope, looks foolish-like at it fer uh minute or two and then tears it up and scatters it along th' trail. When they're all gone I hands him his pack of tobacco. He rolls uh smoke sorta thoughtful-like and lights up.

"Shiner," sez he, "I got uh danged rotten memory, but I'm glad of it. That communication I jist tears up nets us jist five hundred apiece, and probably saves my life.

"If th' sheriff got that letter about th' time that hold-up is pulled off—well, I'm glad fer my sake that he never got it. Mebby he won't let me marry her anyway."

"Not wishin' to pose as uh sure thing gambler, Friday," sez I, "but from th' present indications, yore chances look to me like about Sixteen to One. Want to bet?"

"Not on your whangdoodle!" sez Friday.

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MALENA

A three-part story

Part I

by

FARNHAM BISHOP

and

ARTHUR GILCHRIST BRODEUR

Authors of "In the Grip of the Minotaur."

CHAPTER I

A QUIET EVENING IN MONTEREY

"CONFOUND those drunken blackguards!"

Throwing down his pen in disgust, Captain Harry Culver of the Flying Artillery leaned over the massive black walnut desk between him and the window and gazed down into the little plaza. From the open front of the Rough-and-Ready saloon, directly opposite his quarters in the Casa Miranda, streamed a thick wavering radiance of tallow-dip candelabra, outlining the unsteady figures of carousing American soldiery.

It was the night of a long-deferred pay-day. Texas Rangers in fringed buckskin, wide-hatted troopers of Yell's Arkansas Cavalry, Missouri "bull-whackers" in red-and-black checked shirts, twelve-month volunteers in tattered uniforms which, for diversity and disreputability belied the very name, trim dragoons and artillerymen in the uniform of the regular army of 1847, were rapidly converting imported Monongahela whisky and domestic mescal into gusty bursts of shouted obscenity.

At the long row of rickety tables opposite the bar, black-coated, high-stocked gamblers from New Orleans swiftly and skilfully stripped all comers, whether at roulette, keno, chuck-a-luck, brag, faro, three-card loo, or Mexican monte. Outside in the moonlight, the venerable little chapel of San Juan Bautista stood incongruously between the Rough-and-Ready and a second garishly lighted structure, which resounded with louder roistering and the shrill cries of courtesans of two nations.

Over the sanded floor and under the barrel-hoop chandeliers covered with pink, blue and white paper cut into patterns, whirled and stamped and shouted the dancers in the *Mucho Fandango*, while Yankee fiddles and Mexican guitars screeched and twanged out, in international dissonance, the popular strains of "Dance, Boatmen, Dance!"

Sighing wearily, Culver resumed, against odds, the careful composition of his confidential report to General Zachary Taylor on the advantages of the battle-field chosen by General Wool and Captain Robert E. Lee of the Engineers, for the little American army occupying Northern Mexico to meet the threatened attack of superior forces under President Santa Anna.

"At no other point," he wrote, in a large and very legible hand, "could the enemy's superiority in numbers be so thoroughly minimized or our light batteries be so effectively employed against masses of lancers

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and infantry, as at the place shown in the accompanying map drawn by Captain Lee: the pass of La Angostura, one and one-half miles south of the rancho of San Juan de Buena Vista."

As Culver wrote the last word, a furious oath rang out across the plaza. The rumbling mutter of angry men arose, then several excited voices speaking all together:

"By ——! The girl's got pluck! Leave her alone!" shouted one.

"Have at the minx again, Bill!" cried another, in high-pitched, drunken accents. "Cut her claws and pick her up by the neck, the Mexican cat!"

Culver leaned both hands on the table's edge and thrust his head far out the unglassed window. At the further side of the plaza, picked out by the rays of the half-moon, a knot of men clustered before the chapel steps, across the lowest of which lay a still, dark form. Above this, and leaning forward as in tigerish protection, a tall, graceful woman crouched, her right hand clutching something that flashed, her face showing white and set against the dark of the closed church door.

Kicking his chair behind him, Culver vaulted over the table on to the window-ledge, lowered himself quickly, hung, and dropped to the basalt pavement. Straight through the middle of the plaza he dashed, trampling the shrubs and scented flowers of its little park under his eager feet. As he approached the group, a burly figure thrust itself forward, one hand hugging the other arm above the elbow, stopped irresolutely at the foot of the steps, and started hastily back as the girl lunged with a blade of slender steel.

With a rough laugh, a second man stepped forward, but more cautiously; and a third advanced simultaneously from the other side. Now the first, a heavy-shouldered, bearded ruffian in a dirty red shirt and nondescript uniform trousers which gave no indication of his regiment, drew clear of the group and, cursing savagely, laid his uninjured hand on his pepper-box revolver.

But before he could draw the weapon, Culver reached him in two long strides and seized his wrist with fingers that made themselves felt to the bone. Holding his man so, he swung round to face the intoxicated volunteers. These, their passions loosed by the fumes of the Rough-and-Ready's venemous whisky, turned on him, growling and swearing.

Culver placed himself between them and the girl on the steps. He had removed his cap, sword-belt, and heavy blue frock-coat before sitting down to write and had neither weapon nor emblem of authority. They crowded closer, their eyes fierce. Drawing himself up, as if on parade, the officer raised his left hand, still holding the bully fast with his right.

"Men, go to your quarters!" he ordered sternly and sharply, and released his captive.

For a moment longer they faced him; then, sensing in the trained confidence of his voice and bearing the superiority of the regular and the officer, they drew instinctively apart, one or two saluted, and all quietly dispersed.

CULVER turned toward the girl and, observing her closely for the first time, could scarcely conceal his astonishment at her beauty. During the ten months of the campaign, and for the entire two years since his battery had left Fortress Monroe for the border, he had hardly seen a pretty woman.

The far-famed loveliness of the Mexican señoritas, which had attracted many a man of coarser fiber into the service, had proved as great an illusion as the charms of the disreputable women who had followed the army for professional reasons. The disappointed soldiery were obliged to make the best of the muddy complexions and Indian features of the lower-class natives; and it was no wonder that the whisky-inflamed volunteers had responded, however unpleasantly, to the very real charm of the gallant and fearless lady whom Culver confronted.

Tall, lithe as an athlete, black of hair and eyes, with a skin like that of an Andalusian, but clear and flawless beyond that of Mexican women, she seemed rather a daughter of the Spanish Moors than the offspring of their degenerate, half-breed New World descendants. Her large eyes still sparkled with indignation and excitement; and her red, finely carved lips still curled over tiny, perfect teeth.

Culver's trained eye took in the situation at once. There, on the lowest step, lay the huddled, unconscious figure of a white-haired, aristocratic-looking old Spaniard.

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A cut over one eye, from which the blood had trickled down his face, showed the brutality of the blow that had stunned him.

The girl, her mantilla pulled away, her right sleeve torn, furnished silent evidence of the reason for the disturbance. At the foot of the steps, splintered beneath some soldier's foot, lay an empty sword-cane, the blade of which still gleamed in her hand.

"I am very sorry," Culver addressed her, in Spanish, "that any American soldier should so forget himself as to offer insult to a lady and a defenseless old man. I see that this gentleman suffered injury in your defense; the only reparation I can make you is the assurance of my assistance and protection. Are you a resident of this city? Have you a home here in Monterey to which I may have the honor to escort you?"

Before she could answer, the old man stirred feebly, and, opening his eyes, called faintly—

"Malena!"

"*Si, tio mio,*" she replied in tenderest tones, stooping to raise the weak old head.

Culver, bending over them pityingly, suddenly felt the presence of some one else and turned swiftly. By his side, one foot on the lowest stair, stood his subaltern, Lieutenant Wolf Tone O'Brien.

"Have I missed a disturbance, captain dear?" he asked anxiously. "Faith, isn't she a beauty—for a Mexican?"

Malena looked up, her eyes twinkling.

"Thank you, lieutenant!" she answered in perfect English. "Though I do not know whether to take your remark as a compliment to me or an affront to those whom you suppose to be my countrywomen."

Blushing as red as his artillery facings, O'Brien gasped, stammered out a few incoherent words of apology and departed in ignominious haste.

More gravely now, Malena turned to Culver.

"I owe you a great debt," she began. "If you had not come, my uncle would doubtless have been killed and I should have been most unpleasantly placed. We came, Uncle Lucas and I, in the coach from Tampico, and were on our way from the Hotel de Diligencias to my uncle's home. We had to pass that wine-shop just as the tumult in the dance-hall there brought half-a-dozen ruffians out into the plaza. They stopped us. Uncle Lucas tried to protect me with his sword-cane, but they struck him down. You must have seen the rest."

"Fortunately, I did," Culver answered. "But now, Señorita Malena, it is best for you to make your way home, before you are interrupted again. If you will show me the way, I will carry your uncle, for he can not possibly walk in his condition."

She nodded gravely and pointed across the plaza.

"It is only a little way, I believe; he told me that his house was at the farther end of that large block just opposite."

Culver lifted the old man tenderly and carried him, without apparent effort, across the plaza. At the Casa Miranda, where he and his battery were quartered, they turned into the street to the left and followed it between two blank rows of closed and shuttered houses.

Except for themselves, the street was deserted. So narrow were the sidewalks and rough the pavement—torn up to make Mexican barricades and sketchily replaced by the Americans who had stormed them at the taking of the city five months before—that Culver walked on one side of the street with his burden and Malena on the other.

She easily kept pace with him and even a little in advance, as if she were the escort and he the convoy. Her eyes looked keenly from one deep-shadowed doorway to the next and she held ready for instant use the long, light sword whose point gleamed red in the moonlight.

"Lord, what an Amazon!" said Culver to himself. "If I hadn't come up when I did, there'd have been one or two dead volunteers in front of those chapel steps."

Suddenly Malena laughed a loud and very happy laugh that made strange music in that empty street.

"Oh!" she exclaimed in English, "do you know I've been wanting to do this all my life?"

"Do what?" demanded Culver bluntly, wondering if the reaction of the excitement just past was bringing on a fit of hysterics.

"To walk down one of these old Spanish streets, all moonlight and shadows and balconies, with a drawn sword in my hand, and adventure waiting just around the corner."

They reached and turned the corner as she spoke. A few steps further and they came to a wide, deep archway in the western wall of the block. A porter and two other men servants looked up from their game of

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monte, then sprang to their sandaled feet with a shrill babble of questions.

"Silence!" commanded Culver, and obtained it at once. "You two, carry your master, Don Lucas, to his room and place him most carefully on his bed. You, there, run for the nearest doctor. *Pronto!*"

The three servants vanished, and Culver turned to the girl.

"You have been more than kind," she said, "strangers though we are to you. I shall not forget."

"It was little enough," he responded, "and I am always ready to be of whatever assistance I may, Señorita Malena. Perhaps I should say, Doña Magdalena."

She smiled.

"It will do well enough; it is the Spanish for my name. Now goodnight, and thank you again."

She extended her hand; and, taking it, Culver felt a card pressed into his fingers. With a gesture of farewell, she disappeared into the dark archway.

It was several minutes before Captain Culver realized that it would not do for an officer and a gentleman to stand staring at a lady's door, particularly when he had known that lady less than twenty minutes. Also he suddenly remembered that he had forgotten to give her his name. Drawing a deep breath of regret, he turned away and walked to the eastern end of the block, acknowledged the salute of the sentry at the entrance of the patio, passed his beloved six-pounders parked in the great courtyard, and ascended the outdoor staircase to his own personal quarters on the upper floor of the Casa Miranda.

Fumbling for flint and steel—the quartermaster's department was just out of locofoco matches—he struck a light and held Malena's card close to the tallow candle. But first he stepped over to the windows and closed the shutters to exclude the ribald tumult across the square. Then he raised the candle, and examined the dainty card in his hand, the key to the identity of the most beautiful of Mexican women.

Hardly able to believe the evidence of the delicately engraved script, he held it almost in the candle's very flame. There could be no doubt, it was legible beyond the possibility of misreading:

MISS MADELINE FORTESCUE,
Fortescue House,
Hawarden, Flintshire, England.

CHAPTER II

A DESERVING DEMOCRATIC DIPLOMAT

THREE-QUARTERS of an hour after Captain Culver had returned to his quarters, across the little plaza stalked a figure which seemed the embodiment of grotesque mystery. Long, lank and angular, draped in an ill-fitting black frock coat and swathed in tight trousers that had once been the same color, a brown beaver hat slouched over his eyes, Mr. Zebulon P. Fales, confidential agent of the State Department at Washington, crept cautiously down the middle of the street running past the block which housed Madeline Fortescue at one end and Captain Culver at the other.

Keeping well outside the narrow strip of moonlight, peering constantly to right and left, Mr. Fales made his way toward one of the dark doorways of the block, his hand closing about the grip of the pepper-box revolver in his pocket as he approached the house. At regular intervals a yellow glow appeared and vanished on a level with his mouth, as he nervously puffed at a cigar whose odor outdid the chronic smells of the Mexican street.

Now his right hand pulled the pistol out of his pocket, while his left fumbled with a large brass key. One turn, a screech of the rusty lock, and the special agent thrust himself swiftly into the empty, unswept hall. Caught in the rays of a candle from an open doorway before him, he withdrew hastily behind the stout street-door, and held out his weapon waveringly toward the light.

"Close the door, if you please, señor!"

A slim, dandified Mexican officer stood outlined against the light of the inner room, bowing gracefully, with a sweep of the wide, silver-crusted sombrero. Fales emerged somewhat uncertainly, and lowered his pistol at the sight of his unarmed host.

"Cap'n Hidalgo?" he asked dubiously, and shut the door by the safe expedient of backing against it.

"At your service, Señor Fales," answered the Mexican, "if it be indeed the honored representative of his Excellency, President Polk. Permit me to suggest that we first make certain of each other's credentials."

"That's me, Zebulon Fales," the other assured him. "Here's the documents to prove it."

He extracted from the inside pocket of

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his coat a large, rusty leather wallet, and drew out of this a handful of dingy packets.

Captain Hidalgo led the way into the large room which was insufficiently furnished with a splendidly carved mahogany table and two chairs of the same design. A pair of heavy silver candlesticks, containing tall wax candles, furnished the only illumination, and left most of the room disconcertingly dark. Fales peered into the corners, to assure himself that all was safe, and then, without waiting for an invitation, seated himself at the table.

Hidalgo took the proffered documents and indicated a portentous-looking square packet in front of the American.

"I think you will find those in order, señor," he remarked.

Fales broke the thick seals, stamped with the eagle, serpent, and nopal of Mexico, and made a pretense of reading the Spanish text. Noting the name "Hidalgo," and the signature of President Santa Anna, he was content and relaxed his look of vigilant suspicion.

The Mexican had likewise occupied himself, at least ostensibly, with Fales's credentials; but under cover of his reading, his glance rested covertly on the dingy trousers, coated with the dust of an arduous journey, the unwashed and unshaven features, the self-satisfied expression in the shrewd eyes, the long, slightly twisted nose, and the tobacco-stained lips which still enwrapped an extinguished cigar.

Captain Hidalgo himself offered the most striking contrast to the American. Bushy black hair, carefully tended, curled luxuriantly about his swarthy temples. His eyes were large and somber, his features delicately regular, hardly redeemed from effeminacy by the dapper little mustache and firm chin. His semi-military costume was exquisitely kept, and, with its rich contrast of black and silver, seemed unconsciously to enhance the quiet dignity of its wearer. The trim, smart jacket, braided with silver and set with round silver buttons, the trousers flaring out above the small, glossy boots and laced half-way to the knee with silver cord, over white silk, characterized Captain Hidalgo as a gentleman and an aristocrat. The only distinctly military touch was a black leather sword-belt with silver frogs; and a single flash of vivid color, the sash of crimson silk at his waist, but emphasized the richness of his costume.

Fales tossed Santa Anna's gorgeous script on the table and drawled through his cigar:

"Well, cap'n, I reckon we can proceed to business. I'm satisfied if you are."

"Everything is quite regular, señor," the Mexican answered. "But first allow me to provide a little refreshment against the heat. My hearty apologies for the lack of service, which the nature of our business makes necessary."

He bowed and withdrew to a back room. When he returned, bearing a silver tray with a decanter and two wine-glasses, Fales was on his feet, picking at the boards which covered the windows.

"It is hot," he observed. "And you've got the place shut up like an oven."

"Again, señor, the exigencies of the occasion. You would not have the lights betray to the town our presence, so irregular in this untenanted house?"

"Right, son," Fales answered good-humoredly, "but in that case I'm going to peel my coat and take off my boots. Lend a hand, will you?"

Slumping into his chair, he thrust out one ample foot, and Captain Hidalgo, Mexican gentleman, concealing his disgust as well as he might, pulled the taut trouser-strap back over the heel and dragged off the dust-tanned Blucher boot. The second followed; and Hidalgo daintily brushed off his shapely hands under the edge of the table.

Fales stood up, removed his dingy frock coat, shoved the beaver hat on to the back of his head, sat down again, and put his white-stockinged feet on the corner of the table.

Still the courteous host, Hidalgo filled both glasses with sherry, and, getting to his feet, gravely handed one to his guest.

"To the very good health of his Excellency, the President of the United States!" he offered.

The American, without rising, nodded and drained his glass noisily.

"Thankee, cap'n," he responded, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "I prefer corn licker myself, but this is likely stuff for a Mexican drink."

The officer filled his guest's glass again, and permitted himself an acid smile.

"And now," he said, "as you so cogently observed, it is to business. What has the Administration of your so glorious country to say to President Santa Anna?"

"Well, you know about where we stand.

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I reckon General Santa Anna has read Buchanan's notes. At least, he's answered 'em, if he hasn't been clear enough to suit."

Hidalgo raised his eyebrows.

"To be frank," Fales continued, "you know as well as I do that your President owes a good bit to James K. Polk. Where was Santa Anna when this war broke out, last May? Running a cock-pit down in Havana, after clearing out of Mexico two jumps ahead of his beloved constituents. Soon as Paredes became President and declared war on us, Santa Anna sent a man called Atocha to the White House with the proposition that if we'd let Santa Anna go back to Mexico, he'd chase out Paredes and make peace with us. So Santa Anna came back in the steamer *A-rab*, right through our fleet off Vera Cruz, all hands looking the other way, as instructed. Now that he's President again, what we want to know is: when's he going to perform his part of the bargain?"

Hidalgo's nostrils quivered.

"I know nothing of the understanding you are so good to speak of," he replied. "But you may rest secure that any assurance his Excellency our President may give to his Excellency President Polk will be carried out to the letter." His black eyes searched those of the other for a moment. "But you are not drinking, Señor Fales."

Fales drained his glass and held it out for more.

"This wine improves on acquaintance," he remarked. "To your very good health, Cap'n Hy-dalgo."

The Mexican bowed ceremoniously and pledged his guest.

"It's this way," Fales resumed, taking out a huge clasp-knife and experimenting on the polished arm of his host's mahogany chair. "These United States want peace. You want to understand that, son. We're willing to go a long way to get it, too. If you don't know the situation, I might as well tell you, so's to have everything clear. All the cards on the table, that's my motto. The Administration offers to pay fifteen million dollars and call all claims quit, if Mexico will recognize our title to California, New Mexico, and Texas. That's handsome, I call it. There's five million dollars' worth of claims our citizens hold against the Mexican Government for American property destroyed in your everlasting revolutions, to say nothing of a considerable number of American lives. We're quite het up about those lives, too."

Hidalgo considered a moment.

"Texas to the Nueces River," he purred gently.

"Not much, son!" the American retorted sharply. "Texas to the Rio Grande. Your President agreed to recognize that little point after Sam Houston and the Texans got through with him at San Jacinto, in '36."

"But he signed under duress!" Hidalgo protested. "Could any nation submit to violence and preserve its honor?"

Fales, who was by this time somewhat heated by the wine he had been consuming, and had not observed the temperance of his *vis-à-vis*, sat up straight, jabbed his knife-point into the mahogany table, and fixed Hidalgo with a knowing eye.

"Look here!" he remarked in a confiding manner. "It's a good enough bargain for anybody. All Santa Anna has to do is to pocket that fifteen million, hand over the territory, and retire for life. If your people get excited about it, he can come to the United States or light out for Paris. A man can live a good while on fifteen million, and pretty comfortably, too."

"You forget that President Santa Anna is a man of honor," Hidalgo retorted, his eyes betraying the indignation which his well-controlled voice concealed.

Fales caught the look and changed his tactics.

"Well, it's all right. I only wanted to see how you'd take a pleasant joke. As I was saying, what we want is peace. We let your President come back to Mexico, and greased his slide for him, too. We expected when he got rid of Paredes, that he'd stop the row down here and make peace with us. He hasn't done it, and we've been forced to give General Taylor a free hand. Hasn't been very pleasant for you with him rampagin' around, has it?"

Captain Hidalgo drew a deep breath and managed to compose himself.

"Señor, put yourself in our place," he replied. He spread out his hands. "The Government of the United States has seen fit to invade our country, to attack our forces, to seize and occupy our cities. Even now, besides the territories you claim, your General Taylor holds Monterey, Saltillo and Aguas Nuevas, hundreds of miles below the Rio Grande. Can we, could any nation honorably make peace under these

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circumstances? To accept your terms now would be to make a shame of our manhood, to sell our liberties. Can not you see that peace is impossible while the invader remains on our soil? Toward your people we are favorably disposed. Naturally, we resent your recognition of the rebellious Texans, your occupation of Santa Fé and Upper California, and your uncalled-for invasion of Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, and Nueva León. But there is opportunity for your Government to obtain peace, a glorious, humane peace. If your troops were to be withdrawn from Mexican territory, we should be glad to submit our case to any impartial tribunal. But let me offer you a cigaret." He drew out a silver cigaret case.

"Thanks, don't use 'em," Fales replied, and took from his pocket a twist of molasses-colored tobacco, from which he cut a large piece.

Transferring this to his cheek, he masticated thoughtfully. His eyes a little wide at this breach of etiquette, Captain Hidalgo helped himself to a cigaret.

"That's reasonable enough, only it can't be done," Fales began. "If your folks would get excited over the sale of California and New Mexico, what do you think ours would say at the idea of withdrawal?"

Hidalgo shrugged his shoulders. The situation was getting on his nerves.

The oppressive heat of the unventilated room had begun to affect Fales's head. Unused to sherry, its seductive mildness had lured him to immoderate indulgence, and in the stifling atmosphere its fumes had dulled his usually acute brain.

"To tell the truth," he confided recklessly, "the Administration can't stand this sort of thing. The voters are getting mighty tired of this war, anyhow; and, as I say, we want peace. But if we get clean out of Mexico, if we quit, you know what they'll think. They'll say we were afraid of you, that we ran to save ourselves a licking. Once folks back home get to thinking that, it's all up with the Democratic party. There won't be hide nor hair left of us. Polk'll go, and we'll all go with him."

He spat profusely.

"Oh, I see," said Hidalgo understandingly. "A *pronunciamento*, yes?"

"What's that?" Fales frowned suspiciously.

"What you call a row," the other smiled.

"You bet!" answered Fales emphatically.

"Señor Fales," resumed the Mexican, "I think I see a way out of the difficulty. That which angers our people most is General Taylor's continued occupation of Saltillo and Aguas Nuevas. What concerns both your people and ours is peace with honor. If you were to make, oh, so little a concession to Mexico's pride, a concession which should at once satisfy the peaceful desires of your citizens and leave their honor intact, would not the natural friendship between our nations reassert itself?"

"That's a good one, son," Fales agreed warmly. "Just show me, that's all."

Hidalgo raised one finger.

"Thus," he said, his quiet voice taking on an energy which compelled the other's attention. "Suppose that you, señor, with your great influence at Washington, make clear to your esteemed Government how warmly our people feel. Show them, moreover, the fervency with which we desire your friendship, on the basis of an honorable peace. Persuade your Government to concede a little to our pride. Let General Taylor be ordered to evacuate Saltillo and withdraw to Monterey. Then, our people having received an earnest of your good intentions, there will be no more trouble. President Santa Anna will be well able, in that case, to discuss peace, with every probability of an outcome satisfactory to both nations."

Fales smiled expansively, nodded and spat again.

"Good!" he commented. "That'll fix old Zach Taylor for certain," he chuckled.

"General Taylor?" Hidalgo asked with more than a gleam of interest. "How will it fix him, as you so humorously say?"

"Oh, just a joke, son," Fales answered, grinning. "Just between ourselves though, I like your plan. You pass it on to Santa Anna, and you have my word to mention it to Buchanan."

"The Señor Buchanan is your Secretary of State, is it not?" Hidalgo queried.

"Correct. There won't be much difficulty about it. I won't promise, mind; but the chances are that General Taylor will make up his mind to withdraw to Monterey before very long."

With an enthusiasm that was contagious, and not altogether feigned, Hidalgo seized the American's hand.

"Señor Fales," he cried, "you have made it possible for peace to return to our

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troubled country! In the name of Mexico, I thank you!"

Fales rose, shifted his quid and spat.

"One thing more," he said with slow emphasis. "If General Scott should happen to occupy Vera Cruz without too much fuss and feathers, it might help things along."

Hidalgo flushed.

"That will receive due consideration, señor," he replied more gently than he felt. "But first, of course, you will see that General Taylor withdraws to Monterey?"

"If it takes every bit of tongue in my head!"

"Ah, señor, such an eloquent tongue!" the Mexican cried warmly. "And now, since it grows late, I am sure you will excuse me. To our meeting again, señor, and go with God. Mexico thanks you!"

"Good luck, son," Fales nodded, pulling on his boots and coat, and starting for the door. As he passed out, Hidalgo could hear him chuckling: "Oh, this'll fix old Zack! The Whigs will have to look around some more!"

Picking up the glass from which his guest had drunk, Captain Hidalgo dropped it on the floor and ground his boot-heel into the fragments.

"Would that it were your face, pig!" he muttered fiercely.

LAYING aside the card of the amazing Miss Fortescue, Captain Culver sat down at his desk, picked up his pen, and prepared to resume his report on the advantages of the position at Buena Vista. His thoughts, however, no longer flowed in their professional channels, but insisted on following the adventure of the evening, from the sudden uproar in the plaza to the disappearance of the dashing heroine within her uncle's doorway.

From scene to scene he followed her; but most of all he pictured her as she had stood on the steps of the old chapel, her eyes flashing, the thin, deadly blade gleaming in her hand. He imagined to himself what he had not seen: the drunken throng pressing close; the sudden, brutal attack; her uncle's gallant stand and overthrow; then her own falcon-like descent, the swift snatching of the sword, and the quick thrust through the bully's arm. Good heavens! Was there any one like her? Such superb courage! And such beauty!

He brought himself up with a start. Idiot! This was not what he was in Mexico for, to dream about a girl, to neglect his urgent work for idle thoughts of a girl's bright eyes and lovely lips. With an effort he cleared his brain and concentrated upon his task.

Slowly, laboriously, he wrote, stopping to untangle his wandering thoughts every few sentences, of contours, pointblank and line-of-metal ranges. But, even as he drove himself on, drowsiness stole upon him. For the last seventy-two hours he had been in the saddle all day and most of the nights, riding over every yard of the rough ground at Buena Vista and then posting back to Monterey. In spite of himself he nodded, and at last slept, the pen still in his fingers. Into his dreams the figure of Malena stole, her eyes gazed into his, his lips framed her name.

Suddenly he awoke with a start, her face still lingering in his memory, and saw her standing tall and stately, beside him. He was awake, his eyes wide open—he blinked them rapidly—and still saw her face, clear and lovely, looking anxiously down at him in the candle-light. Then the candle went out.

"Malena!" he cried involuntarily in his astonishment.

There was no reply. Leaping to his feet, Culver reached out through the pitchy darkness to where she had been standing but found nothing there. Leaning across the desk, he threw open the shutters, but all lights on the plaza had been extinguished and the moon had set. The room was as dark as ever, till his eager hands found the tinder-box and relit the candle. Holding it above his head, he strode rapidly around the great empty cube of a Mexican bedroom, looking into every corner. There was no one but himself in the room.

Heavy footsteps approached down the corridor, and a burly figure loomed in the half-open doorway. It was Sergeant McNab, non-commissioned officer in charge of quarters.

"Did the captain call, sir?" he asked, saluting.

"Were you here just now?" demanded Culver in a tone that startled McNab, a Waterloo veteran, almost to the jumping-point.

"Yes, sir. I knocked at the captain's door and said that Taps had been sounded, sir. Then the licht was put oot, and I was

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gaein' back doon the stair when the captain ca'd me back, sir."

"Did—did you see or hear anything unusual?"

"Nae, sir."

"Thank you, that is all. Good night, sergeant."

"Guid nicht, sir."

The door, then, had been guarded, and the windows closed with solid board shutters. If any one had been in the room with Culver when he awoke, that person must be there still. The walls, like all the others in Monterey, were covered with smooth white plaster, precluding any possibility of a secret passage.

There was one hiding-place: a huge old wardrobe of carved black walnut.

Culver raised his hand to open the wardrobe door, hesitated in embarrassment, and knocked respectfully on the panel. There was no response.

"I am going to open this door," he announced loudly.

Receiving no answer, he flung back the door, revealing his own clothes and nothing besides.

Feeling rather ridiculous, Culver undressed and went to bed. Before falling asleep his mind busied itself with the strange visitation. Could it have been real or merely a carrying-over of his dream?

He could have sworn he had seen her there. But how could she have entered and gone? Of course it had been a dream—but it had been vivid, though. If only that infernal candle had not gone out. He sighed wearily, and next moment was fast asleep, the thought of Malena once more mingling with his dreams, upon his lips the name of Malena.

CHAPTER III

OLD ROUGH-AND-READY

"NO, SIR! No withdrawal!" General Zachary Taylor brought his ponderous fist crashing down upon the pine table that served him for a desk.

"You're a man of peace, Mr. Fales. I'm a soldier. You attend to your end of the nation's business and I'll attend to mine."

"But, general," protested the confidential agent of the State Department, "I have the assurance of Santa Anna's agent that the withdrawal of your forces from Saltillo and Aguas Nuevas to Monterey would make possible negotiations for peace. You can't expect Mexico to make peace while you remain in a threatening position."

"Mr. Fales, President Polk ordered me down here to make war on Mexico, and I obeyed. If he wants me to march out again, let him send me orders to that effect through the War Department, and I'll fall back to Monterey or the Rio Grande or the Mississippi. But while the responsibility lies with me, I'd rather remain in a threatening position myself than have Santa Anna and his bandits take a threatening position between me and the road home. If I withdrew my men to Monterey, how long would it be before that one-legged Mexican thief shut us all up here and starved us out? You, being a civilian, didn't think of that, of course."

"General Santa Anna would be incapable of such treachery, sir." Fales, who, as a spread-eagle New England journalist and cross-roads orator had helped swing a doubtful state for Polk at the preceding presidential election, sloughed off his country colloquialisms and instinctively put on his grandest manner in Taylor's formidable presence, and now assumed an air of aggrieved dignity.

"Did you never hear of the Alamo?" snorted Taylor. "Or Goliad, where Santa Anna had three hundred American prisoners, including the sick and wounded, massacred in cold blood? Or of the treaty he signed at San Jacinto and put his boot through afterward? That's the sort of man the Administration has helped make President of Mexico, and who's now ready to take the warpath against us with twenty thousand men."

"And you have——"

"You know blamed well how many I have!" exploded the old Indian fighter. "Four thousand raw volunteers, four batteries, and one squadron of regulars. That's what Washington has left me to hold all Northern Mexico with!"

"Then, general," said Fales triumphantly, "why don't you give up the territory to the south and fall back to Monterey?"

"Because, sir, because——"

The general paused and his eye lighted up with satisfaction as a tall, sunburned artillery officer entered the room—the office of the late Alcalde of Monterey, in the Palacio Municipal.

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"Report ready, captain? Good! Captain Culver, shake hands with Mr. Fales of the State Department and show him the whys and wherefores of our present position, in case Santa Anna starts north. Show him why we can't afford to fall back to Monterey, here."

"Yes, sir."

Taking a handful of silver from his pocket, Culver placed a dime at one end of the long pine table.

"This, Mr. Fales, represents Encarnacion, our southernmost outpost, in the desert. Santa Anna, advancing north across the desert from San Luis Potosi, must follow the main road running through Encarnacion."

"Why can't he come cross-lots?" asked Fales.

"No water-holes off the main route, and none at all in the last thirty-five miles of desert, north from Encarnacion to Aguas Nuevas, which we'll indicate with this twenty-five-cent piece. The main body of General Taylor's army is being rapidly concentrated at Aguas Nuevas."

"To keep the Mexicans from getting a drink."

"Precisely, if they come straight north from Encarnacion. But they might swing to the west by La Puenta de Santa Elena to the rancho San Juan de la Vaqueria, on the Saltillo road. To forestall being cut off by such a move, our forces would have to retreat down that road toward Saltillo, through the pass of Buena Vista. We'll represent the pass by the space between these books."

Culver placed two large volumes flat on the table and back to back, with a long, finger-wide crack between their bindings.

"At the north end of this pass, which is about twenty miles long and from four to six miles wide," he continued, "is the town of Saltillo, which is Spanish for 'Jumping-off-place,' and which I'll mark with this fifty-cent piece. Only a little way further north and at right angles to the pass, runs the road over which all our supplies come by wagon-train up from our base at Camargo, on the Rio Grande, to Monterey. Withdraw our forces from the Buena Vista pass, let a Mexican army hold Saltillo, and we'd have to give up Monterey or starve to death."

"But Monterey is a long ways north of Saltillo," protested Fales.

"A long way northeast, Mr. Fales. I'll mark the approximate position with this silver dollar."

Fales studied the improvised map in deep silence, impressed with the unanswerable logic of topography and wishing he had known more about it the night before.

"So you see, Mr. Fales," concluded Culver, "Buena Vista Pass is the key, not only to this city of Monterey but all northern Mexico. And the key to Buena Vista Pass is a certain point in that twenty-mile valley where we can turn and smash any pursuing Mexican army, no matter how big. I've ascertained the ranges and positions you asked about, sir," he added to the general, "and they work out perfectly. The facts and figures are all here."

He handed a long, well-filled envelope to General Taylor, who did not open it but continued to look shrewdly at the man from the State Department.

"Santa Anna's agent knows a thing or two, eh, Mr. Fales?"

Realizing that he had been made a cats-paw, Fales instinctively looked round for

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some one else to shift the blame to. In modern political parlance, he "passed the buck" to the man who came handiest—Captain Culver.

"That slick-voiced Mexican knew so much," he snarled, "that I'm convinced he knows these plans of yours as well as we do. If you military men can't keep a secret——"

"We can," interjected Culver crisply. "Any intelligent Mexican who had followed the revolutionary fighting down here would know the value of that pass. As for these plans, they were not set down on paper till last night, by myself, in my own quarters."

"Didn't step out for a drink and leave the papers lying around for anybody that happened in to read them?"

"I did leave my quarters for a few minutes, though not for the purpose you mention. But no one could have entered them in my absence without passing the sentry outside."

"Why did you leave your quarters, captain?" asked Taylor, filling his old corn-cob with strong black twist.

"A young lady, Miss Madeline Fortescue—a British subject, by the way—was molested by some drunken volunteers, and her uncle, in attempting to defend her, was seriously injured. Noticing the affair from my window, I went to her assistance. That is all."

Taylor whistled.

"What d'ye think of that, Fales?" he demanded. "Attack on a British subject, international complications, and so on. Here's a job for the State Department."

Fales looked important.

"I have no doubt, general, that the matter will be dealt with through the proper diplomatic channels. It may turn out that the whole thing was a ruse to lure Captain Culver away. Are you willing to swear that no unauthorized person could have entered your room and read this report last night?"

"No," said Culver quietly. "I am not."

"Why not, sir?" demanded General Taylor. "You know what it means if Santa Anna learns of these plans?"

"Perfectly, sir. But I do not know how to speak of what took place in my quarters last night. It is a trivial thing, hardly worth mention, but after I returned from escorting Miss Fortescue to her uncle's home, I fell asleep at my work, and when I awoke, I distinctly saw, or seemed to see, this same Miss Fortescue bending over my desk. Just then the candle went out. When I relit it, I was alone. Probably it was a dream, but——"

"Aha!" shouted Zebulon Fales, a typical professional Anglophobiac of that day and generation, compared to whom a Twentieth Century pro-German is a slavish admirer of all things English. "A British subject, in the dead of night, in the quarters of an American officer! She knew of this report and came to steal information that would give England the whip-hand over us. You will not forget, general, that Great Britain owes us a grudge over Oregon, that she is furious over our occupation of California, that she would force us, if she dared, to free our slaves! Remember that the British have an understanding with France and have been intriguing with Mexico to prevent our annexation of Texas. This may mean the destruction of your army. Arrest that woman before she can get to Santa Anna with our secret plans!"

"Cool off, Fales, cool off," drawled old Rough-and-Ready. "Do a little remembering yourself. The lady in question, as a British subject, is under the protection of the English flag. She has been molested already, and that must be straightened out. If we lay hands on her now, without proof, the very thing you fear will happen. The English are like the devil—they look after their own. We don't want another war started till we're through with this one."

"But our whole cause is in danger!" Fales insisted. "If you persist in driving Mexico to desperation, General Taylor, there can be no doubt where the responsibility for further bloodshed rests. Santa Anna, if furnished by this woman with complete information concerning our plans, might well forego his peaceable intentions and crush our army of occupation. Then, seeing their opportunity, the British would attempt to retrieve their fortunes in Oregon and California. By all that's holy, general, withdraw the army to Monterey and let us make peace with Santa Anna and conclude the war. But first of all arrest this Fortescue woman!"

Culver strove manfully with his indignation and contempt. More than anything in the world he longed to kick Fales, to kick him long and hard.

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"General Taylor," he interposed, "the facts speak for themselves, so far as concerns the question of withdrawal. As for Miss Fortescue, I would recall to Mr. Fales your shrewd observation of a moment ago: if we molest her in any way, without first possessing evidence that she is a spy, Great Britain will have good cause for supporting Mexico against us. And all the evidence we have is my very dubious observation of last night, together with the fact that Miss Fortescue speaks good Castilian as well as English and was dressed like a Mexican lady. But most foreign ladies assume that dress when traveling in this country. The events of the evening, especially the appearance and the heroic conduct of Miss Fortescue, made a deep impression on me; and it was but natural that I should dream of them. Moreover, it is hardly likely that an English gentlewoman should be a spy in the pay of Santa Anna."

"I resent that implication!" cried Fales. "There is not the slightest chance that the lady is a spy of Santa Anna's. It seems to me far from certain, however, that she is not in the secret service of Great Britain. I have informed myself most carefully as to the character and intentions of Santa Anna, and I assure you that that gentleman neither retains spies in his service, nor cherishes any but the friendliest sentiments toward the United States. I have been officially assured that his only desire is peace."

"That will do, gentlemen," the general interrupted. "We can discount your all-too-sweet opinion of Santa Anna, Mr. Fales. I haven't forgotten Goliad and the Alamo, if you have. And as for you, Captain Culver, what assurance have you that Miss Fortescue is an Englishwoman who can talk Spanish and not a she-Mexican who can talk English?"

"Every word, every inflection of her voice," exclaimed Culver eagerly, "is that of a well educated Englishwoman. Instead of the pasty, colorless complexion of the Mexican ladies, living indoors and stuffing themselves with sweets, she has the rosy cheeks of outdoor life. Unlike any of the native women, she has perfect teeth, and does not cramp her feet into shoes a size too small for them. Nothing like her could ever have been born and brought up in Mexico. In spite of the strange evidence I have been bound to give against her, I stand ready to vouch for Miss Fortescue. Whatever may come, I accept the responsibility."

Old Rough-and-Ready choked over a mouthful of rank tobacco-smoke.

"By gad, captain!" he chuckled. "You have a high opinion of the lady! You follow her points as Colonel May follows those of a horse, and you dream of her till you don't know whether you've seen her or not. There's a reason for that, and one that I've heard tell of before. Well—" and his eyes lost their twinkle and grew stern—"I'll look into her case myself, and I accept your promise to stand by the consequences. As for the other matter, Mr. Fales, that is settled already. Captain Culver has shown you the reasons why. The army will not withdraw. Come in!"

A grinning orderly entered, swallowed the grin, saluted and announced, as if he had been a footman:

"Miss Madeline Fortescue, to see General Taylor."

CHAPTER IV

INSPECTION

INTO old Rough-and-Ready's bare, tobacco-smelling headquarters came Malena, no lovelier than she had been the previous evening, but so different that Culver could hardly believe his eyes. The somber black dress and black lace mantilla had made her appear entirely Mexican; now, in an expansive, undulating gown and lacy, frilled bodice of Gobelin blue, she looked crisply and daintily English.

Against the masses of her coal-black hair nestled a blended wreath of violets and pink rosebuds, the foreground of an exquisite Paris bonnet of Tuscan braid, which was tied with a love-knot of flowing blue ribbons under one cheek. Even her complexion, dark as it was, seemed that of an English girl, suffused with a delicate pink that matched the rosebuds against her hair.

Culver sprang for a chair. Fales, taken wholly aback, stood with drooping jaw and lack-luster eyes. Only General Taylor retained his calm. Swiftly old Rough-and-Ready transferred his pipe from his teeth to the pocket of his faded green frock-coat, removed the battered old straw hat from his white hair, and uncrossed his cottonade-clad legs.

"Miss Fortescue," he said courteously,

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"I hope we see you recovered from the shock of last night's unfortunate events."

Malena looked with incredulous surprise at the shabby, amiable old gentleman behind the desk.

"Is this—are you Major-General Zachary Taylor?" she asked him demurely.

"Yes, ma'am. Never wear uniforms; can't abide 'em. Does your uncle improve?"

"Thank you, general," Malena replied, "Uncle Lucas seems much better. As for myself, thanks to Captain Culver, I have suffered no harm."

"The affair will be thoroughly investigated, I promise you," Taylor assured her. "Captain, have you learned the regiment to which those rapscallions belonged?"

"Unfortunately, they were, like most of the volunteers, only half in uniform and that half dirty and indistinguishable. They might have been camp-followers for all I could tell, or they might have belonged to any one of the three volunteer regiments now in Monterey: the Louisville Legion——"

"Oh, general, I am sure no Kentuckian could be rude to a woman!" Malena broke in.

Taylor smiled expansively, well pleased at this tribute to his own State.

"That seems to excuse the Louisville Legion," he chuckled. "But we'll find the blackguards out, Miss Fortescue, if we have to sift the army."

"I shouldn't think of pressing the matter," she assured him, "since no great harm has come of it. But if you could sift the army, general, you might succeed in restoring a bereaved family to happiness, and would possess my undying gratitude."

"Just tell me the trouble, ma'am, and I'll do what I can," old Zach assured her.

Miss Fortescue's face grew troubled, and her fingers crumpled her little lace handkerchief.

"It is my brother Gregory," she said in low, sad tones. "He ran away from home more than a year ago, and we were sure he had come to America. Last November a Mr. Apsley Evans, an old friend of father's, landed at Liverpool and lost no time in visiting us. It seems that he sailed from New York on the Dramatic Line packet *Macbeth*, and, while going down the bay, his ship overtook a transport bound for Mexico. The transport's deck was crowded with troops, and in one of the soldiers Mr. Evans recognized my brother, clothed in the blue uniform of a private in the American army. The news nearly crazed my mother, whose mind has now quite given way under the strain of her anxiety for Gregory's life; and the doctors declare that the only hope of restoring her reason is the sight of her boy again.

"I hastened to Liverpool and took ship at once. I landed in Tampico last month, and since then have searched General Scott's army in vain for any trace of my lost brother. As you cherish the memory of your own mother, general, help me to find my brother, and to bring my mother once more to health and happiness!"

Taylor cleared his throat noisily.

"Captain, just ask Major Bliss to step this way, will you? This man Bliss," he confided to Malena, after Culver had gone into the next room, "is my adjutant-general and the knowingest man in the world. Nobody can ask a question that he can't answer, right away, and answer right. Perfect Bliss, the boys call him."

Culver returned, followed by the perfect one, Major W. W. S. Bliss. He wore long, mournful side-whiskers that swept his shoulder-straps, but he was a brave and efficient officer for all that.

"On what day did the *Macbeth* sail, Miss Fortescue?" asked Taylor.

"On the fifteenth of October, 1846," she replied.

"What transports left New York on that date, major?"

"The ship *Daniel Webster*," replied Bliss, tugging thoughtfully at his side-whiskers, "cleared from New York then, carrying Reno's Mountain Howitzers, the First Rocket Battery, a detachment of the Topographical Corps, and recruits from Governor's Island for the 1st and 2d Dragoons, 4th Artillery and 4th Infantry. Arrived at Matamoros on November 23d."

"If your brother is in any of the forces under my command, and is still in the land of the living, I trust we shall find him," Taylor said solemnly. "But first, as a necessary formality, you won't object to our looking at your credentials, Miss Fortescue."

"Oh, not at all," she assured him, her face brightening.

From a neat morocco case in her lap she produced several long envelopes which Taylor opened himself.

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. "Here's something for you, Mr. Fales," he observed, and handed the special agent an official-looking letter bearing the seal of the American legation in London.

Fales looked at it, noted the clerkly hand, the legation stationery, and the signature of Mr. Bancroft, American Minister to the Court of Saint James.

"Seems all O. K.," he confirmed.

A second letter proved to be from the Reverend Vernon Eustace Fitz-Vernon, vicar at Hawarden, certifying the gentle breeding and good character of Miss Madeline Fortescue, a cherished member of his flock. General Taylor occupied himself with a brief note from General Winfield Scott, U. S. A., which recommended Miss Fortescue to Taylor himself or to any officer of the American army to whom his epistle should be presented, and urged that no pains be spared in furthering her search.

"Old Fuss-and-Feathers, his own hand," mused Taylor.

Finally there was Miss Fortescue's passport, which Fales found in good order.

"But what about this uncle with whom you came from Tampico?" he asked. "Where's his passport and things?"

"Uncle Lucas accompanied me only from Tampico. He is a resident of Monterey. Doubtless you know him—Don Lucas Miramon. My mother was Spanish, you see."

"Obviously," said Perfect Bliss. "Don Lucas is the leading Spanish merchant here; buys up corn and sells it to the commissary. Keen business man, but honest. Hello, here's May!"

Into the room strode a man who looked more like an old Norse sea-king than an officer of the United States Army. "His beard a foot before him, his hair a yard behind," were as yellow as the broad stripes down his trouser-legs or the silk sash round his slender waist. Spurs, buttons, belt-buckle, saber-hilt, all that the regulations required to be "of yellow metal" were solid gold. General Custer, in after years, was but a faded carbon copy of that pluperfect type of the old-time cavalryman, May of the 2d Dragoons.

"Miss Fortescue!" he exclaimed with an impressive bow and no loss of time. "The 2d Dragoons await the honor of your inspection!"

"Oh!" cried Malena in the best early Victorian manner. "Is this Colonel May, the hero of Resaca de la Palma?" May made no denial. "But how did you know——"

"Harney of the 3d wrote me by last night's coach; said how you lined them all up at Tampico and went down the ranks, looking for your scalawag—I mean, long-lost brother: tall, blond, good-looking young Englishman, takes after his father, but assumed name and regiment unknown. I've only got a half-squadron here, but it's ready for your inspection now—with General Taylor's permission."

She looked imploringly at old Zach, who nodded.

"And then I should like to see all the men in Captain Culver's battery, and are there any other regular troops in Monterey?"

"That's all," said Taylor. "Look 'em over, and if you find your brother I'll have him ordered back to the base and recommend his discharge."

THANKING them all profusely, Malena withdrew on the arm of Colonel May. Culver, looking after them, felt an unaccountable desire to pull the dragoon's long hair as he swaggered past. And neither of them suspected that Colonel Clay of the Louisville Legion, Captain Pike of the Arkansas Cavalry, five staff officers and a topographical engineer, were waiting for Malena in the plaza below. They too had had letters from friends in Tampico.

Others also. Returning to the Casa Miranda, Culver found his entire battery shaving, scrubbing, patching, and polishing in joyous anticipation. From the top of Number Two caisson, Limejuice Jones, the battery comedian, was loudly proclaiming himself to be Lord Marmaduke Fortescue, the missing heir.

"Captain dear," hailed O'Brien, the length of the officers' corridor, "have ye a razor-strop ye could lend me? Sure, I cut me own in two puttin' an edge on the blade fittin' to get ready for her with. When is she comin'?"

"How do I know?" barked Culver, slamming the door of his own room behind him. "Sentimental imbeciles! Where did I put that boot polish?"

He was still looking for it when there came the sound of heavy feet in the corridor and a knock at the door. Opening it, Culver saw Zebulon Fales, looking rather disheveled, and the corporal of the guard.

"Caught this civilian prowling about the

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rear of the building, sir," explained the corporal. "He said he was a friend of the captain's, so I brought him up."

"Quite right, corporal," Culver answered. "Leave him with me."

The corporal saluted and withdrew.

"See here, captain!" expostulated Fales, rubbing the back of his neck. "Is this proper treatment for a representative of the Administration in the discharge of his duty?"

"What conception of duty has brought you sneaking around my quarters?" demanded Culver. His instinctive dislike of the man had grown to a positive hatred since the agent's demand for Malena's arrest. "Suppose you explain your presence here."

"When I do, young man, you'll find out for certain that I knew what I was talking about," retorted Fales, following Culver into the room and closing the door carefully. "That Fortescue woman is a spy, and she did come to your rooms last night for the partic'lar purpose of getting at your report. I've got the evidence."

"Produce it."

"First, I ruxed round and discovered that the woman's uncle——"

"The lady's uncle, sir," Culver interrupted.

"The lady's uncle, then, lives at the other end of the same block that you do. So I looked round some more, and found a good clear passage from old man Miramon's house to this room!"

"The devil you did!"

"The whole block of empty houses between his house and this one has been tunneled out through the partition walls on the top floor. Dead easy for her to snoop through the passage and——"

"That was done by Worth's division at the taking of the city," Culver broke in. "They advanced under cover, through the houses, clearing room after room and then firing down on the rear of the street barricades. It's an old Texan trick. You didn't think Miss Fortescue sapped and mined her way through between her arrival last night and the time I had my dream, did you?"

"Hardly. I'm no such fool. Don't matter much how the tunneling was done so long as it's done, does it? That girl could have walked through the smashed-in partitions clear to the house next door, gone out on the balcony, crept along that till she came to the window of your corridor, and come in straight to your door."

"Physically perfectly possible," admitted Culver. "But, if Miss Fortescue did all that, and actually came to my room last night, how could she have got out of this room again and evaded the sergeant who was rapping at my door while I thought her here? It must have been his knocking, by the way, that awoke me. She would have been arrested before she could leave the room."

"Easy," Fales assured him. "You saw her, then the light went out. She struck it out, of course. When the sergeant came in or went away down the hall again—whichever he did—she slipped past him in the dark, ran down the corridor, got out on the balcony, and back to her uncle's the same way. Your waking up prob'ly interrupted her reading of the report, and she's coming here today to get another look. Lucky enough it's in General Taylor's hands."

"Very brilliant indeed," Culver said sardonically. "I asked for evidence, however, and you have not produced a shred."

Fales tapped the palm of his left hand with the forefinger of his right.

"We'll make her convict herself," he urged. "You leave a few papers, something that'll look tempting enough to fool any spy, on your desk. I'll hide in the room here—this big wardrobe is just the place—and watch. She's only waiting to give you the slip during inspection. When she gets you out of the way, she'll sneak straight up here. If she's a spy, she'll make for the desk and pick up those papers. If she's innocent, she'll never know any one suspicioned her, and I'll keep my mouth shut."

"That's just what you'll do," Culver warned him grimly. "You'll have only your labor for your pains, but I'll try the scheme, just to convince you. After you have made sure that your suspicions are unjust, you will do well to keep out of my way."

He went over to the ponderous old wardrobe, backed up to it and grasped it with a hand on either end; then, with a heave of his powerful shoulders, he lifted it bodily on to his back and carried it about six feet along the adjoining wall, setting it down at the point best suited to command the desk. Fales swung the doors open, stepped inside,

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and drew them to again, leaving only a crack through which he could get a clear view of the desk.

Lieutenant O'Brien entered and reported mournfully,

"She's here—with a fat old aunt for a chaperon!"

CULVER'S Battery—D Battery of the old Fourth Regiment of Artillery—fell in without arms, opened ranks and stood rigidly at attention as Miss Fortescue and the captain passed slowly down the line.

There were seven Englishmen there, two as gently born as the brother she sought, an equal number of Germans, ten Scotchmen, sixteen native-born Yankees and thirty Irish, American soldiers all. Eagerly Malena looked up into every face, from the stern and rock-bound Orderly Sergeant Peabody to cherubic Trumpeter Schwartz.

"Gregory is not here," she said sadly. "Have I seen them all?"

"All but the sentry on the roof. I'll have him relieved at once."

"Oh, no, please—let us go up instead. I love to go through these romantic old Mexican houses."

They left D Battery standing at ease in the patio, but they could not leave behind a stout, dark, determined lady with a vigilant and disapproving eye—Malena's aunt, Doña Dolores Miramon.

"Aunt Dolores was simply furious when she found I had not only gone out unattended in broad daylight but actually called on General Taylor at his headquarters," Malena confided to Culver. "The nicest young ladies in Mexico don't do anything like that, it is quite clear. Poor darling, hear her puff!"

Poor Aunt Dolores was puffing mightily by the time they helped her up the last steps of the steep stair leading to the *azotea*—the flat, high-parapeted roof. She was not used to exercise or exposure to noonday heat.

After one glance at the sentry, a moon-faced young Bavarian, Malena leaned her elbows on the parapet and looked out over the compact little white-walled city, to the battered bulk of the bishop's palace on the Loma de Independencia, and in the distance the noble peaks of the Sierra Madre. Culver was telling her an anecdote of the storming of the palace, when they heard a moan behind them and discovered poor Aunt Dolores looking extremely unwell.

Between them they helped her down to the floor below and placed her on the camp-bed in Culver's own room. Leaving Malena to care for her, Culver hurried away to fetch some water. He had completely forgotten the existence of Zebulon Fales.

"O Dios!" groaned Señora Miramon. *"O purissima Virgen!"*

The protesting bed heaved and creaked beneath her ponderous discomfort. Fales, half-smothered as he was in the close, hot wardrobe, kept a vigilant eye on the desk, for he knew that Malena, if she had any sinister purpose, would make full use of the present opportunity.

Malena, however, still bent solicitously over her aunt, fanning that lady's flushed features with assiduous tenderness. Suddenly the American drew in his breath so sharply that he started again for fear that he had been heard.

The old lady had closed her eyes, and Miss Fortescue had laid down the fan, darted a stealthy glance to left and right, and risen swiftly and silently to her feet. With a quick, backward look, she tiptoed across the room. Fales glued his eye to the crack between the wardrobe doors. On she came with enough stealth to justify any suspicion of her purpose.

Watching intently, Fales saw every movement of the catlike feet, every rapid, rippling line of the undulating body. Then she disappeared from his line of vision. Strain his eyes as he might, Fales could not see her. At last he heard the rustle of her dress, but not near the desk. Instead, she seemed to be doing something beside the wardrobe.

A moment went by, then he heard her breathe a sigh of relief. Softly as she had come, she tiptoed back to the bed and resumed once more her solicitous attention to the invalid.

She had not been near the desk.

At that moment the door opened and Culver entered the room.

CHAPTER V

THE GATE OF THE DEAD

ZEBULON PIKE FALES was a sorely puzzled man. His suspicions seemed utterly discredited by Malena's disregard of the decoy papers, and he seemed to

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have succeeded only in making an enemy of Culver and a fool of himself. Nevertheless, he could not get rid of the conviction that Malena was not so innocent as she appeared. Somehow, he sensed something vaguely familiar in her face, an indefinite quality, a fleeting expression, which reminded him of some one he had seen before. He was fairly tortured by his inability to lay hold of this recollection to place it, and set his imaginings to rest. And what had she been doing round the corner of that wardrobe?

Waiting till Aunt Dolores was revived with the water Culver had brought, and the captain and the two ladies had left the room, Fales sprang out and investigated.

A pale parallelogram of clean plaster and much dust on the floor showed where the wardrobe had recently stood. In the center of the newly revealed patch of wall was a rounded niche, about a yard high and eighteen inches deep and wide at the bottom, tapering to a point like a Gothic window at the top, plaster-walled, floored with a marble slab and absolutely empty.

Fales was still staring at it when Culver came back from seeing the ladies home.

"Did she go near the desk?" demanded the captain crisply.

"No, she didn't. But——"

"Or as much as look at the papers on it?"

"No, but she came over here and did something to this hole in the wall."

Culver looked at the niche with scant interest.

"That is simply a recess, made to hold the statuette of a saint and a couple of candles to burn before it, such as are common all over Northern Mexico. Miss Fortescue, being used to English houses, probably thought she would find running water there and went to get some for her aunt."

"That sounds reasonable, Captain, I must admit," said Fales, scratching his head without taking off his beaver. "But if you could have seen her, as I did, a-snoopin' and a-sneakin'——"

"Enough, sir!" thundered Culver in a voice like one of his own six-pounders. "There has been no snooping and sneaking about these quarters by any one but your miserable self! Moreover, I warned you if your plan failed, as it has, to keep out of my way hereafter!"

He stopped because, except for the sound of some one running rapidly down stairs, he was all alone.

MISS FORTESCUE did not find her brother at Monterey. Immediately after her inspection of D Battery, she again called on General Taylor and firmly announced her intention of going to Saltillo to prosecute the search; and, if unsuccessful there, of continuing southward to the concentration point at Aguas Nuevas, where, she declared, she could hardly fail to find the missing Gregory.

Old Rough-and-Ready sternly refused to permit her to go a mile nearer the front; and then compromised by giving her full permission, an army ambulance, and an escort of dragoons.

But a new obstacle presented itself. Señora Miramon, who had been horribly shocked at her niece's earlier unchaperoned incursion into headquarters, was present the second time and refused her consent to Malena's departure unless a proper and suitable duenna could be found.

This threw Malena into a state of nerves; she protested that whatever happened, she must go at once, before her dear brother should be killed or ordered elsewhere. Nothing else mattered, she declared, if only she could find Gregory and restore him to his poor mother's arms.

Most fortunately, at this point General Taylor remembered that Father O'Neil, chaplain of the 2nd Dragoons, had told him that the venerable Madre Concepción, Mother Superior of the Convento de la Purissima Virgen de los Siete Dolores, was in Monterey and most anxious to return to her charges at Aguas Nuevas before her absence should injure their spiritual well-being.

Madre Concepción was a pious, meager soul of more than fifty Summers, well qualified to serve as chaperon even for a ninety-mile journey. It was arranged that afternoon that the start was to be made at sunrise the following morning.

Culver, when O'Brien told him of this at mess that night, was astonished at the keenness of his own disappointment. He had taken it for granted that Malena would remain some time in Monterey with her relatives, at whose house he might see her as often as he wished. This would have been very often indeed.

Now that she was apparently passing out

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of his life forever, he found the thought of her departure a most bitter one. Her slightest gesture, her every expression and motion, lived vividly in his mind; twenty times that night he started from his work, thinking he heard her laughter ringing in his ears. Her lovely face and glowing eyes obsessed him, till at last he closed Ringgold's "Theory and Practise of Light Artillery," brought his fist down on the cover of that entrancing volume, and declared with awe-struck solemnity—

"I'm in love!"

His mind once clear to himself, he decided swiftly on a course of action. Should he call immediately at her uncle's home? But her uncle was Spanish, and Castilian etiquette would forbid him to approach nearer to his heart's desire than the width of a barrack-like parlor, guarded by a rigid rank of stiffly-seated relatives. Better to mount and ride out in the morning to the outskirts of the city, meet the ambulance and accompany it as far as he might on the road, and somehow find a way, before he must turn back, to tell her of his love. Then, if she could care for him, she would make the opportunity to see him again before she sailed for England. If not . . . .

He sat there, gazing out through the window from which he had leaped, only the night before, to her rescue. As he watched the rising moon silver the quaint old belfry of San Juan Bautista, a knock at the door startled him from his reverie. It was an orderly with a sealed envelope. Tearing it open, Culver read:

Headquarters, Army of Occupation,
Monterey, Nueva León, Mexico,
February 16, 1847.

CAPTAIN HARRY CULVER, D Battery, 4th Art'y,
SIR:

You will proceed with your command through Saltillo to Aguas Nuevas, and there report to Brigadier-General Wool. You will start as soon as possible after dawn tomorrow.

Z. TAYLOR.

As soon as possible after dawn tomorrow! D Battery itself would be ready, down to the last spare sock and horse-shoe nail, to start at the break of day. But there would be three days' rations and forage to draw from a red-taped commissary and Q. M. D. That would mean two hours' delay at least, before he and his guns could set out on the same road, for the same destination, as Malena's. With good luck, he might hope to overtake her between then and nightfall. And then the long ride to Aguas Nuevas together!

TWENTY-TWO miles southwest of Monterey, the Saltillo road, like a suddenly wounded snake, writhes sharply into a series of twisting coils. Overhead, on either side, tower the gigantic walls of the wild Sierra Obispo Mountains, their lower slopes a tangled mass of semi-tropical forest—tall trees mantled with drooping moss and choked with intertwining vines.

Where the sun shone into its depths, this matted growth gleamed green with glistening leaves and blue and scarlet with prismatic flowers; but just ahead, where the road was most tortuous, the mountains encroached forbiddingly on the pass, shutting out the light and casting the forest into impenetrable gloom.

Malena pointed to a shallow *barranca* to the right of the road, where, peeping from the tall, brown grass, bright red and yellow flowers flaunted their glory. Between their jeweled cups, rude wooden crosses stood at irregular intervals in the grass.

"What are those crosses?" she inquired of the trooper riding beside the ambulance. "Is this a wayside sanctuary?"

"Hardly that, miss," the dragoon answered grimly. "D'ye see that thick clump of bush by the mouth of the nearest ravine? Right there a gang of bandits ambushed a party of peaceful Mexican travelers, about three months ago, and murdered every last one of them, men, women, and kids. Those crosses there mark the graves. They call this place *La Puerta de los Muertos*—the Gate of the Dead."

Malena shuddered.

"There is no danger from bandits now, is there?" she queried anxiously.

"Not so far north as this, miss. They're all with Santy Anna, down at San Luis Potosi. We'll look sharp though, just to make sure."

He rode forward, conferred with the red-bearded corporal, and returned. All four of the dragoons recapped their carbines, loosened the heavy sabers in their scabbards, and keenly scrutinized the road to right and left. As they rounded each successive bend in the road, Madre Concepción heaved a sigh of transparent relief and crossed herself gratefully.

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After twelve miles of this, they emerged from the last turn onto a stretch of straight, clear road, on both sides of which the mountains receded, leaving a gently sloping plain of about seventy yards on either hand. At irregular intervals these plains were cut by wild, deep-walled *barrancas*, running down from hill-flank to road in roughly parallel lines. Malena peered anxiously ahead, and now and again darted excited glances to either side.

Something sparkled in the sunlight by the edge of a broad *barranca*, ahead and to the right. The bearded dragoon at the mules' heads saw the flash and broke into a startled curse.

"Lancers!" he shouted, and, seizing the bridles, backed the frantic animals up.

"Leggo!" yelled the driver, tugging frantically at the reins.

Seeing that he had the mules in hand and realized the emergency, the corporal let go the bridles and ordered the troopers to advance carbines. Swearing fluently, the enlisted man driving the ambulance cramped the light vehicle, backed, and turned. As the team swung round and dashed off to the rear, the four dragoons remained to cover the retreat.

Up from the thick, dry undergrowth lining the lips of the *barrancas* a pistol-shot ahead, sprouted a forest of slender shafts, twinkling spear-heads and fluttering pennons. From right and left, the gay-coated lancers of Miñon leaped their horses out on to the road. As fast as they emerged, they spurred their mounts, leveled their lances, and charged down on the tiny escort.

The four carbines barked together and the three foremost lancers pitched headlong out of their high-peaked saddles. Before the smoke lifted, the four Americans had wheeled their mounts and were galloping smoothly to the rear.

Each dragoon pulled down the trigger-guard of his carbine, depressing the solid breech-block, shoved home a paper cartridge with its load of "buck and ball," and snapped the trigger-guard up again. The sharpened upper edge of the breech-block sliced off the sealed end of the paper cartridge; the dragoon cocked the hammer, placed a percussion-cap on the nipple, turned in the saddle and dropped another pursuer without checking the speed of the retreat.

As the gallant four sped past the mouth of a wide and crooked *barranca*, a tardy troop of lancers, placed there to cut off all escape, dashed out and on to the road, merging with those who had first appeared. As fast as one fell, another filled his place; riding over prostrate horse and man, they swept menacingly on, a torrent of flesh and steel.

The Mexicans' mounts were fresh, the Americans' were spent. For the last time the dragoons discharged their carbines; then, casting the useless weapons aside as the hostile ranks drove close, they wheeled round and fired their heavy horse-pistols.

Two lancers dropped, shot through the body; two horses pitched forward and dropped in mid-gallop. The column was dammed for an instant, swaying, stumbling over the writhing fallen.

Drawing their sabers, the dragoons hurled themselves, cutting and lunging madly, into the milling mass. For one moment, men and horses reeled and weltered in tangled conflict; then, trampling the transfixed heads and bodies of the heroic four, Miñon's lancers swept on and overtook the laboring ambulance.

Casting the reins aside, the driver snatched a gun from the boot; but before he could raise his weapon, a lance-point drove through his brain.

TOWARD the end of a long, dusty day's march, Culver, at the head of his battery, rode out of the gloomy Puerta de los Muertos, and into the declining sunlight of the open road. Here he stopped, shaded his eyes with one hand and looked eagerly down the raised highway. As he gazed, his lips relaxed in a boyish smile. There in the dusty distance he could see the black bulk of Malena's vehicle, and knew that the lonesome stage of his journey was past.

All at once his eyes caught the glint of sunlight on steel, he saw the cloud of dust in the wake of the wagon grow thicker, and the ambulance check and turn. Memories of gruesome tales of robbery and murder flashed across his mind; yet the country was reported clear of all bandits except those in Santa Anna's army. As for that army, it was supposed to be at San Luis Potosi. What if it were there no longer?

"Battery, attention!" he commanded. "Trot! Gallop!"

The ring of his voice and the sudden pop-

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ping of carbines ahead made men and horses forget the thirty-four long miles they had put behind them. They remembered only that they were Culver's Battery of Flying Artillery, going into action, and they flew.

Six powerful horses snaked each light muzzle-loading six-pounder over the ground like the button on a rattler's tail. Between the pieces galloped the mounted gunners—none riding on the limber-chests, as in the field artillery, but every man horsed. Caissons, forge and battery wagons rolled thunderously in the rear.

Now Culver could see the ambulance speeding toward him, the driver lashing his weary mules. Now, too, he could estimate the strength of the hostile cavalry—four hundred lances. And his battery had no supports!

"All non-commissioned officers, horse-holders, and Number Fives remain mounted and on the road!" he shouted, his voice carrying easily the length of the column, through all the rattle and jingle and roar of the advance. "Action Front!"

O'Brien's section to the right of the road, Sergeant Peabody's to the left, the four pieces swung into line, bounded forward over the rough ground, unlimbered, and went into action at the edge of two convergent *barrancas* that formed an acute angle pointing to the front, with the road splitting its apex.

As the charges were rammed home, Culver could see the forward surge of the massed lancers, foaming down on the four devoted dragoons like a mountain torrent, the flash of American sabers, the reeling shock, and the overwhelming wave on wave of Mexican horsemen.

"Fire!"

Even as the foremost pursuer lanced the ambulance-driver in his seat, the heavens opened with a quadruple roar and rained down shrapnel as close behind the vehicle and its priceless freight as the gunners dared drop it. The idea was what in Flanders today they call "barrage fire," and the effect was to blow a ghastly twenty-yard gap in the racing column of close-packed cavalry. The three hundred in the rear of the horror instinctively drew rein, the half-hundred in advance closed round the ambulance and lanced the stampeding mules.

Then out of the cannon-smoke burst upon them what Limejuice Jones called "Culver's Cavalry." Two dozen at most, they charged home upon the astonished lancers.

Under the ponderous impact of the towering northern horses, the undersized Mexican ponies were knocked squealing from their feet. Rising in their stirrups, the stalwart gunners wielded their ponderous, old-fashioned sabers, shearing through sombreros and skulls.

In utter amazement, the lancers gave back, milling and interfering with their comrades behind. Those who fell never stirred again, for sharp-shod hoofs trampled them into the dirt.

Fighting furiously, his long saber running red, with point and edge, slash and stab, Culver cleared his way to the door of the stalled ambulance. Malena crouched close to it, staring wide-eyed into the thick of the fight. With his unencumbered left arm he reached in and seized her round the waist.

As he lifted her light body to the saddle, he noted dumbly that she was struggling against him like an angry wild thing. Nevertheless, he swung her up before him and turned his horse's head. At that moment, Sergeant McNab reached in and drew out Madre Concepción, whose shrieks and appeals to the saints sounded even above the tumult of battle. Passing the Mother Superior to a trooper beside him, McNab swung joyously into the fight once more.

But what they had come for was done. Culver shouted an order to the scarlet-coated trumpeter who was in the act of running a Mexican through with a captured lance. Leaving the weapon in the lancer's throat, the boy raised his instrument, and blew "To the rear!" But he was compelled to sound it again, and yet again, before the fighting artillerymen grasped their leader's intent. Hewing furiously, they cut a road through the rallying lancers and drove their horses at a gallop back toward the guns.

With a yell of triumph, the main body of Mexicans surged up and boot to boot swept on in pursuit. But their very numbers hampered them. So thick they pressed together in the road that they interfered constantly, horses stumbling, and ever and again hurtling with their riders to the ground. Nor could they better matters by deploying over the level ground beside the road, for those that did so were checked by, and some rode headlong into, the deep *barrancas* that cut the valley. Seeing this

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danger, those in the rear crowded back into the road, and the seething, swaying press galloped on with fulminating hoofs.

A scant thirty yards ahead of the oncoming lance-points, the hindmost American dashed through the line of guns. These had been loaded by O'Brien's orders with half-charges of powder and double stands of grape, and their muzzles depressed to sweep the road. Like one gigantic shotgun, all four pieces cut loose with a fearful hail of grapeshot.

The foremost rank of lancers fell as falls the crest of a breaking wave, and those behind them piled up over the dead and dying in a fearful heap of broken bodies, snapped lances and shattered limbs. As fast as trained men could work the guns, salvo after salvo tore through the choking smoke-reek.

Shrieking aloud, the rent ranks strove to turn, only to be caught between the terrible fire and the onsweep of their own supports, whose impetus carried them forward whether they would or no.

At last those survivors who could won free; the rear ranks, less crowded than those before, wavered, broke and fled. Culver, now directing the fire of his battery, checked the impatience of the men who had so lately charged with him, against all the rules of war, a vastly superior force. Artillerymen again, he ordered them to their stations.

As the lancers broke, "Canister!" he cried; and the fugitives were torn and battered by the bursting cases of deadly shot. The remnants of Miñon's gay squadron urged their horses furiously to flight, and, while their comrades fell before them and behind, sought refuge in the wooded spurs of the sierra.

Malena, with a canteen of water and strips torn from her petticoat, was among the wounded before the smoke of the last salvo had lifted, while Madre Concepción was giving what ghostly comfort she could to the dying. Culver was starting toward them when a cloud of dust approaching from the south caught his eye. He studied it through his field-glasses, then turned to O'Brien.

"Tell the boys to stop cheering and stand by the guns. Here comes a strong column of infantry at the double, with half-a-dozen mounted scouts out in advance."

Ten minutes later the leader of the newcomers rode up to the battery. He was a short, slight man, with a sparsely bearded but singularly attractive face, well-known to all the Army of Occupation, for this was General Taylor's son-in-law and the commander of the 1st Mississippi Rifles—Colonel Jefferson Davis.

"We were on the march to Saltillo when we heard your guns and turned back as fast as we could," he said, looking over the field with appreciation. "But you haven't left any work for any one but the surgeons, Captain Culver."

"If your medical officers can look after these poor devils, Colonel Davis," answered Culver, "I propose to push on at once, as my orders are imperative."

Having caught up with and rescued Malena, he was naturally prejudiced against having her escorted by any rifle regiment officered by good-looking and dashing young Southerners. Presently, with two captured Mexican horses in the traces of the shot-torn ambulance, Culver's Battery trundled wearily southward over the corpse-strewn road, leaving behind them a "Gate of the Dead" in bitter truth.

CHAPTER VI

LOVE FLIES OUT OF THE WINDOW

D BATTERY camped that night by a spring three miles beyond the scene of the skirmish, and at dawn next day they swung southeast on the highroad to Saltillo.

Now, as he had hoped and dreamed, Culver rode beside the wagon which carried Malena. After the tense anxiety and fear for her which had oppressed him during the fight, his spirits rose like a boy's.

As they rode along, he pointed out to her the foaming stream which, taking its rise in the looming Sierra Madre above them, boiled down the pass beside the road. The morning sun, with the wonderful clarity which it attains only in the Mexican atmosphere, painted glowing, translucent pictures of rose and pearl on the alabaster clouds; and, silver and pink in its rays, the snow-capped peaks towered up into a sky of turquoise and amethyst.

The limpid beauty of the sparkling day leaping to his brain like wine, Culver wished to share with the woman he loved each loveliness of earth, air, and water; every bril-

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liant color seemed to exist that she might take pleasure in it, every flash of foam, each magnificent sweep of hill and rise of mighty cliff was his to show her, theirs for mutual delight.

Malena had cast off all effect of yesterday's grim experience with her weariness. Gone, too, was that strange emotion, whatever had been its cause, that had prompted her to struggle against him. With a girl's ready laughter and vivacious charm she responded to the eagerness of his mood; and every mile that passed brought them closer in spirit to each other.

As the day drew toward its close, the sun picked out in crimson flame a domed stone tower in the distance. Malena seized Culver's arm with a little gasp of delight and pointed to the glowing spire, rising high on the shoulder of an abrupt hill.

"What is it?" she cried. "It is so lovely!"

"That," Culver answered, "is the cathedral at Saltillo, where we shall pass the night. In a moment you can see the town."

Before they had ridden far, for an instant the dying sun flooded the low walls and flat roofs of the houses, huddling foursquare about the cathedral and thence descending part way down the hill. From the town's edge, the slope broke abruptly so that the whole settlement seemed, as it were, to be leaping from the crest.

Just as the sun plunged from sight, they entered the squalid outskirts of the city. An hour later, Malena and Madre Concepción were lodged in the Casa Valente, a spacious, well-furnished house from which the occupants had fled precipitately before the American advance, in the Fall of '46. Culver, having seen to the disposition of his men, left his quarters after a hearty evening meal and went to the Casa Valente.

The air was chill with a mountain breeze, and Malena received him in a room whose warmth, supplied by a tile stove brought by Don Ignacio Valente from Holland, was pleasant enough. Snuggled closer to it than any Northern hide could endure, Madre Concepción played the dual rôle of duenna and dampener of conversation.

For over an hour interest flagged; nothing could prevail over the Aztec chill of the Mother Superior, who obviously disapproved of Culver as an American, a male being, and a heretic. Malena fidgeted and plucked nervously at the embroidery in her lap. At length she looked up demurely, and, dropping her long, black lashes, addressed the nun in mellifluous Spanish.

"*Madre mia*, you are weary with your long journey. Do you not desire to rest in your room?"

Madre Concepción, frowning rather pointedly at Culver, replied that she was well enough where she was.

"I am sure a little sleep would refresh you immeasurably," Malena insisted, "particularly as Captain Culver and I have so much to discuss concerning my poor brother, a subject which would bore you horribly. Indeed, we should keep you up very late."

Transparent as this was, there was nothing for the old lady to do but submit; and she left the room with much dignity.

"CAPTAIN," Malena began, "my errand so far has been without result. I have found no trace of dear Gregory. If he is not here in Saltillo, then my only hope of finding him in this world is among the troops at Aguas Nuevas. Could you possibly spare me the time to help me look for him here?"

"I should do so with all the pleasure in the world," he answered, "but unfortunately there are no regulars here. The only hope, as you say, is at Aguas Nuevas. I will accompany you there and do my best to find him for you. I have little doubt that we shall find him at the concentration point. But when you have found him, Miss Fortescue, you will be leaving at once for England, and I may never see you again. I can not tell you how much it has meant to me to know you, even for so short a time. Can you believe that it has made a world of difference in my life?"

"I can not imagine how," she replied, looking him steadily and gravely in the eyes.

He stood up, tall and soldierly in his worn blue uniform, and said his say in the somewhat stilted diction of the time, but with all sincerity and manly fervor.

"Then I will take the liberty of telling you, a thing I should not have the courage to do if we were likely to meet again. But our time together is short, and I can not let the precious moments escape. In all my life I have known no woman like you, none with your splendid courage, your graciousness, or—and I can not help being moved by it—your beauty.

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"Malena, I love you, love with all the fervent devotion of a heart that has never before been shaken. If you can not love me—and I admit that I do not know how you could—my having told you will do you no harm, for you are going home where you will never see me again. But if you can, then will you come back again, back to me, when your mother has been made well and happy once more and this war is over?"

Malena's lashes swept her glowing cheeks.

"Will you forgive me," she asked, her voice struggling between tears and laughter, "if I confess that I have guessed your feelings for some time? You are not good at concealing them, Captain Culver. No, do not interrupt me. My dear captain—I don't know your given name, you see—you are a brave soldier and a handsome man, with rather more goodness of heart than most men. I don't know what I should have done if you had not told me tonight. There would have been no opportunity tomorrow; and as you say, after tomorrow I shall be going away. It—it's rather scandalous to engage one's self to a man whose very name one doesn't know."

"It's Harry," he gulped.

"I always liked that name, and it isn't scandalous any more. After the war is over, Harry, if you still want me, I will come to you."

Swiftly he strode to her chair and was about to snatch her up bodily, when Madre Concepción parted the hangings and swept austerely into the room. With a portentous frown at Culver, she addressed the quite unruffled Malena.

"My daughter in Christ, there are fleas in the beds!"

THE next day's march was one long delight for the lovers, for whom its difficulties did not exist. Its beauties—and there is no lovelier road for happy youth than that which runs among the glorious sierras from Saltillo through the Pass of San Juan de la Buena Vista—were magnified a hundredfold by the joy of their mutual love; its lofty grandeur exalted them above the griefs and anxieties of that sorely troubled land and time.

At last, emerging from the pass, they halted at its summit to look down upon the stream and the lovely valley of La Encantada, the flower-starred valley of the Enchanted Lady. After a halt for rest and dinner, the march was resumed. A steep descent, followed by a long and gradual climb, brought them to the valley itself, situated on a table-land surrounded by imposing peaks and massive crags.

For the remaining seven miles of their journey they rode on through the enchanted valley. Its southern end was white with the tents of Wool's Brigade: four regiments of volunteer infantry; a squadron of Yell's Arkansas Cavalry, two troops of the 1st Dragoons and Bragg's, Sherman's and Washington's batteries.

As Culver's little column approached the camp, they saw company after company drilling in the stubble-fields to left and right of the road; wagon after wagon, loaded with new-bought grain, jolted along the road ahead, and empty carts met them, returning for fresh loads. Beside the crammed Q. M. D. storehouses, great piles of unthreshed, uncovered grain lay safe enough in the rainless, dry-season air. The army was gathering in all it could possibly use and leaving nothing over for Santa Anna.

At the foot of the valley, just beyond the farthest tents, squatted the drab adobe hamlet of Aguas Nuevas. Situated where the well-watered valley met the arid desert, it afforded an apparently ideal base for the American army which found here ample food and water. Against the superior forces which Santa Anna was reported to be collecting at San Luis Potosi, it was shielded by thirty-five miles of barren, waterless sand.

As soon as they arrived, Culver reported to General Wool. Malena, as had been planned for her, went immediately to the Convento de los Siete Dolores, where Madre Concepción put at her disposal a small chamber in the wing appointed for guests. As in all Mexican convents of the time, access to the main building was forbidden to those who had not taken the veil; but this particular institution, founded by one of the Spanish Viceroys in devout remembrance of hospitality received in the town, made a point of receiving and lodging strangers and had erected a special section for their accommodation. Malena found her room small and barely furnished, but neat; and the food was excellent beyond the usual Mexican standard.

Bearded, stern-eyed old General Wool received Culver's report with taciturn approval.

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"I congratulate you, sir, on your handling of Miñon's fellows, on your rapid march, and the good condition in which your command arrived," he commented. "Will you do me the honor to-dine with me tonight, at six sharp?"

Well pleased, Culver hurried back to the artillery lines, for it was already well after five. He was taking a short cut through the camp of the 1st Dragoons when he noticed a tall, slender trooper sitting on an up-ended hardtack box. This enlisted man, dressed in the uniform of a private of dragoons, had an extraordinarily handsome face, coarsened by bad liquor, but still that of a gentleman. Under the broad, soft cap, his hair curled yellow about his ears. Culver, his mind having run for some days on tall, handsome lads with yellow hair, scrutinized him closely; then, making a detour, came up behind the trooper and looked over his shoulder. The man was reading a six-months-old copy of *Punch!*

"Fortescue!" snapped Culver loudly.

The trooper started to his feet, looked about and saluted in great confusion.

"I thought so," Culver commented. "And by what name do you pass in the service, Fortescue?"

"Smith, sir," the prodigal replied with a sickly grin.

"Half drunk, too," observed the officer. "Pull yourself together, Smith-Fortescue. Your sister is here, having crossed the Atlantic to find you."

"My sister?" the dazed youth repeated. "Madge? What could have brought her to Mexico?"

"You will learn tonight. Be at the wine-shop De la Lagrimosa Virgen at eight sharp, and I'll take you to her. Be sober, too."

"Yes, sir."

Culver turned on his heel and walked off. Why was it that the finest girl in the world should have a drunken good-for-nothing for a brother?

CULVER excused himself early, just after the wine. Mounting his big roan, he rode the three-quarters of a mile from headquarters to the wine-shop of the tearful Virgin at a gallop, and arrived at three minutes before eight. Fortescue was there before him, he judged, for a gray troop-horse was tethered to an olive-tree midway between the tavern door and the desert side of the convent.

Leading his own mount to a clump of *aguacates*, he tied the beast securely and strode into the wine-shop. Fortescue stood just inside, tossing down a glass of vino de Parras. He turned at Culver's touch on his shoulder, blinked, set down the empty glass and followed the officer outside, and over to the gate of the guest-wing of the convent, which was opened to them without question. Upstairs Culver led him, and rapped at the door of a room on the southern side of the corridor. Malena herself opened the door.

"Harry dear!" she exclaimed, as the light fell on his face.

"Malena," he said gently, "I have a great and joyful surprise for you. I have brought you your brother."

"My brother?" she echoed.

"Yes. He is here with me." He pulled Fortescue out from behind him and urged the missing one toward her.

"Gregory!" she cried in amazement.

"Malena, by all that's holy!" Fortescue ejaculated.

She stood there, staring dumbly, as if Gregory Fortescue were the last person she expected to see in this world. Culver looked from one to the other in astonishment. This brother and sister, whom he had brought together, showed not the slightest sign of joy or affection in the moment of their reunion. Gregory's mouth was open like that of a strangling fish; and Malena, who had come thousands of miles and braved unmentionable dangers to find him, was silent and undemonstrative.

As he took in this amazing situation, Culver became aware that Malena's face was pale, and revealed more fright than joy. Realizing that something was wrong, he muttered an excuse, and passed out of the room, closing the door behind him.

He descended the stairs and waited outside the door. For about five minutes he paced up and down; then, pausing to light a cigaret, he heard the door open. Gregory Fortescue came out, looking like a hen who has just hatched a duck's egg.

"I say, captain," the fuddled Englishman hailed him. "Deuced queer, what? Been sitting on the stairs trying to make it out."

"Make what out?" demanded Culver. "Aren't you Gregory Fortescue? Didn't you recognize each other?"

"I'm Gregory Fortescue, right enough.

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And she's Malena — little Malena. But——"

"But what?"

"But what does she want to call herself my sister for?"

"Do you mean she isn't— Doesn't your family live in Hawarden, Flintshire?"

"For the last four or five hundred years." The young Englishman looked dreamily at the dirty adobe wine-shop before him, as if he saw again the smooth green lawns of Fortescue House. "When we were kiddies, my sister Madge and I, Malena—little Malena—used to come and play with us."

"If she isn't your sister, then who is she?" cried Culver.

"Malena Miranda, of course," replied Fortescue in a slightly surprised voice, and without wakening from his semi-hypnotic state.

"Miranda?" cried Culver, thinking of the name of his battery's quarters in Monterey.

"Miranda—General Miranda," repeated Fortescue. "Her father. Fine old Johnny with a limp and big white mustaches, driven out of Mexico by one of their silly revolutions and brought Malena to Hawarden with him when she was a little baby. Malena, little Malena——"

Culver felt the street open up beneath him. The Englishman's words, fuddled as they were, carried the ring of truth. Had he not noticed, himself, that Malena appeared more frightened than pleased to see her supposed brother? There could be no doubt: his Malena, his beloved, who had promised to be his wife, had lied. She had lied to him, to General Taylor, to Scott—good God! Fales had been right. Malena was a Mexican spy!

He dashed up the stairs and beat furiously at her door. No answer came from within. He turned the knob, but the bolt was drawn. With a heave of his powerful shoulders, he burst open the heavy door. There was no one in the room. In the candlelight, he saw that the window was wide open. His eye caught a glimpse of something dark on the whitewashed floor. Stooping quickly, he snatched it up. It was Malena's skirt.

With a bound, he sprang to the window and thrust out his head. Clear and unmistakable, he heard the hoof-beats of a galloping horse on the hard-packed road.

"Halt! Dismount! Who goes there? Halt! Halt or I fire!"

Hard on the sentry's startled challenge, a musket roared.

Culver cleared the stairs in four leaps. Like a flash, he was outside and made for his horse. As he tore the halter loose, an unsteady figure wavered up.

"I say, captain, that Johnny took my horse!"

"—— your horse!" barked Culver, as he mounted his own and spurred off into the desert after the receding hoof-beats that were his only guide to Malena.

TO BE CONTINUED

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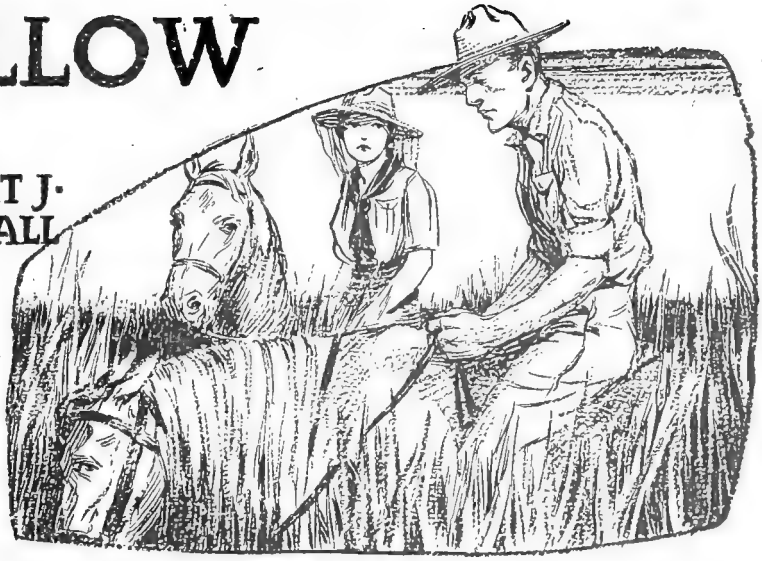
YELLOW

by

ROBERT J. PEARSALL



Author of "Anting-Anting," "The Light of Tambaron," etc.

THE dying cogon grass was like a vast and waveless sea stretching to the horizon. Hot, fearfully hot, was the east wind, listless from its long passage over southern Mindanao; and the cloudless sky was like a superheated bowl inverted over the suffering earth. At its zenith the tropical sun flared blindingly, scorchingly, and there seemed no coolness anywhere in time or space.

Seen from afar, the party seemed lost in these immensities—nine tiny atoms, bobbing specks, barely visible above the surface of the scorched grass. Close up, it became a purposeful party of seven infantrymen and two women, mounted on lean, tough native ponies, and traveling in haste.

One of the women was a girl, irregularly beautiful of face, her delicate feminity but emphasized by her mannish garb. The other woman was middle-aged but strong and active, firm with the reins and with a good seat—her mother.

Preceding them rode a very youthful and good-looking second lieutenant. Following them came five privates, by their looks picked men. And last of all rode a first lieutenant, Kenton.

A tall, slim, almost ungainly man, with a good forehead, a good nose, rather delicate lips and chin, and a worn, anxious, depressed expression; such was this seemingly misplaced individual. Misplaced, for by his rank, of course, he should have led the party.

The trail was very narrow and crooked. Here and there were forks. At one of these forks there happened an illuminating incident.

The second lieutenant had, as was his wont, led the way unhesitatingly. But this time a reluctant and constrained order came from the rear.

"Here! Wait a minute, Edgard."

The tone itself was peculiar. Its effect upon the rest of the party was startling. The girl looked uneasy. Her mother's face hardened. The men grinned at each other. And when the first lieutenant had forced his pony up to the van, the junior officer saluted very formally and distantly.

"I think we should keep to the right here," said the first lieutenant.

"The right! I distinctly remember coming this way last year, Kenton." Edgard's voice was coldly surprised.

"So do I. But look here." Kenton had unrolled a map from a waterproof cover. "This other trail's safer. We've got to avoid that patch of brake."

"It's further by five miles," curtly.

"But we can't take unnecessary chances," Kenton spoke mildly. "Here's Labuk, a hotbed of trouble."

"Our orders read, 'the best time possible,'" said Edgard, darting a quick look,

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derisive of Kenton, at the girl, who glanced away instantly.

"'Compatible with safety,'" amended Kenton.

"Our surest safety lies in speed," retorted Edgard. "Unless, of course, it's absolute safety you're after. In that case we'd better go around by Davao. Or back to Cataplan. Or to Manila and a boat back home, for our best bet. We're not apt to find it here."

"We'll take this trail, though," ordered Kenton, tensely aware of the nasty impeachment underlying the other's jest.

But at Kenton's tone of authority Edgard flushed and his eyes flamed rebelliously. For a moment he seemed on the point of open disobedience. Then discipline had its way. With an effort he controlled himself.

"Very well, sir," he said, saluting rigidly.

Kenton returned the salute and made way for the column to pass him.

And then the men completed the episode. Back along the line the word was passed of the needless detour Kenton was compelling them to make, and they bandied the subject about with angry revilings.

"The poor fluffy-ruffles! Ain't it pitiful?"

"Scairt of his skin, as usual. 'Ud be a mighty good thing for the service if it 'twas tacked on a wall somewhere."

"If we was alone with the weak-kneed son of a goat we'd see who'd boss this job, eh?"

"Yes; but think if we had to fight under the yellow terrier. Let's give thanks we drop him at Malabang."

Deep in their hearts, though, the men were glad of another incident contributary to proof of Lieutenant Kenton's cowardice. For, according to their lights, they owed him hatred, and the more justification they had the better.

Told briefly, as the men of the Sixteenth repeated it one to the other to keep its memory alive, Lieutenant Kenton's story was this:

During the Boxer trouble, he had funked it absolutely. Under hot fire, with his captain shot, he had ordered retreat and run like a rabbit, stampeding his whole company. They had not even stopped to pick up their wounded. And then the English had laughed, and, crowning disgrace, had doubled their interval, flung back the Boxers, rescued the American wounded, and held the same ground with half the men. The next day Kenton had been put in the commissary department and never again trusted on the firing line. Not to this day! And he had not manhood enough even to resign!

So they jibed at him as they rode, and Kenton knew quite well what their mutterings and subdued jeering laughter meant. Yellow, yellow, yellow! That was what they were saying, and the worst of it was he could not blame them. No, the worst of it was that Jean Bradley could hear them! He wheeled his pony into line and followed, his head hanging, his shoulders dragging slightly forward.

But indeed, they all looked fatigued. They had been traveling since daybreak; and the last few hours, in the blazing heat, their strength had seemed to seep out of them. They did not stop either to rest or to eat. They could not, for there was no shade, and the still air under the level of the cogon grass was unendurable.

THEY kept on in much the same order and mainly in silence. Three times that afternoon they rested their ponies, dismounting and leading them. The women did this, too. But when they made camp, two hours before sunset, they seemed little more tired than the men.

It was a simple camp—shelter tents and blankets, canned beef and hardtack, water bags tapped sparingly, ponies tethered out to graze, a running guard posted. A very ordinary camp, except in one particular. The junior officer advertised his opinion of his senior by refusing to mate shelter halves with him. He arranged to sleep with the senior private, leaving Kenton to tent alone.

Toward dusk Kenton drifted in a lonely sort of way to where the women were standing for a moment before their tent.

"Are you as comfortable as possible?" he asked, diffidently. "Isn't there something I can do?"

"Thank you, Lieutenant, no," replied Mrs. Bradley distantly.

But the girl took a step toward him and smiled.

"No, nothing," she said, "except—no, I'm afraid everything's been done. But we do thank you, though."

Kenton bowed, murmured "Good-night!" and withdrew.

But he did not remove himself from the

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girl's thoughts. That night sleep came but slowly to Jean Bradley. In the darkness she lived over their brief acquaintance.

When she had come with her mother to the jungle town of Cataplan four months before, the girl had marked at once Lieutenant Kenton's isolation. He was a butt of jeering ridicule from the enlisted men, he was almost ostracised by his brother officers, he was plainly distrusted even by her father, the colonel. To her father she had gone for the reason. And, learning it, she had pitied Kenton.

Not only that, but in defiance of every one's opinion she had taken him up.

She gave him more time even than she gave the dashing Edgard. They walked, talked, rode, read books together. And she liked him. He was quiet, thoughtful, rather bashful, but strong and honest and dependable.

Or was he? Of course, if he was a coward all that must be a lie.

At times she told herself firmly that his cowardice had been proven, that the rest of the garrison was right in despising him, and that she would follow the general example. But she never did. And when the break in their companionship finally came, it was he who initiated it.

He himself told her the story of his disgrace, simply as it had happened, making no excuses. But he did explain why he had not resigned—family pride, and especially an aging father who had himself commanded a regiment through the Rebellion. It had been quite clear that such news of his son would have killed him. But now he was failing fast. He would die thinking his name still untarnished. When he was gone, Kenton would resign. "The only fair thing to the regiment," he said. And he would go out almost penniless, without profession or trade, into an altogether strange world.

"I'm so sorry—so sorry," Jean had murmured at this point.

And Kenton had leaned toward her swiftly, and then gripped himself.

"I know. You pity me. It's fine of you. But if I were a man who really wanted pity, I'd hardly be worthy of it, do you think?"

After that they were together very little. Jean's parents were elated to believe that she had dropped him. But the truth was otherwise. Kenton had told her plainly enough he cared so much for her that he wanted, as things stood with him, to care no more.

A week later occurred an awkward incident. It had been Edgard's fault. But Edgard was only a boy and impulsive, and there had been amends and apologies. Besides, it had been moonlight, and Jean was woman enough not to underrate his temptation. But Kenton had come striding around a curve in the trail, and—well, she could not tell him that Edgard and she were not engaged. And perhaps, under the circumstances, it was as well that he should continue to think that they were.

Then came the news responsible for the present expedition. An opium-eating Malanao *datto* had run amuck with his followers among the friendly Christian tribes—tribes to which the American government had promised protection. Colonel Bradley's regiment was ordered afield to make good that promise. But it was a divided command—half at Cataplan, half at Malabang. And Cataplan was ordered abandoned for the time.

The women must be escorted to Malabang. Hastily Colonel Bradley, held to Cataplan by his duty, detailed their guard. Seven men—because there were but nine ponies available at Cataplan—and of these, six were to join the availables at Malabang and return with them to the regimental colors.

Of course, Lieutenant Kenton was the seventh. A coward! Could men be expected to trust him or follow him? No, wisely reasoned Colonel Bradley; and Kenton was ordered to go to Malabang and stay there, safe behind the walls, with the women, the sick, and other men of worse than doubtful courage.

Jean Bradley, knew this, Edgard knew it, the men knew it; and all knew too that twice before had the same humiliating exception been made of him since his disgrace in China.

JUNGLE! Impenetrable thicket on either side; above, branches and clinging creepers interlacing like a blanket; perpetual twilight, dim, green and mysterious; a tunnel-like trail, hot and close, filled with an unhealthful vapor. Into this jungle and this trail the party entered about noon of the following day; and that night, under the very nose of the sentry, a terrible thing happened.

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All of a sudden, the sentry reported, the ponies began to act curiously. Presently one went into convulsions. By the time the camp was aroused all of them were dead with tiny *bashlai* darts sticking into their hides.

There was no sign, no sound of an enemy. The world was as quiet as a tomb. Around the little clearing on which they had made camp the jungle gloomed in the starlight, dark, evil, menacing.

It was no wonder that for a minute after they had discovered what had befallen the ponies, the men and women huddled together in a constantly shifting group, each unconsciously working toward its center. For from any quarter might come another poisoned arrow; every rustling leaf seemed the signal of its loosing; death, swift and silent and furtive, lurked in every shadow.

Kenton's voice, thin and cracked as it was, came as a relief.

"We're safe enough for the present," he said. "It must have been only one man, or more than the ponies would be dead already. He's followed us, found out where we're going, crippled us, and gone ahead. Gone ahead to warn a war party somewhere of our coming. He can trvel faster than we can, on foot. It must be that. They'll hit us between here and Malabang. Edgard, let me see you a moment."

Followed a brief conference between the two officers which one of the men heard and afterward repeated to the others, to their delight and somewhat to their comfort. For it improves one's failing courage vastly to condemn the greater lack of it in a man one despises.

Kenton had suggested that the party should give up the trip, return, and thus disconcert the pony-slayer's plans. Edgard had objected violently. They were but a hard day's hike from Malabang, they had nothing but Kenton's theory to go on, and anyway, where they to turn back because of a bunch of flea-bitten natives? But Kenton had still insisted.

Then Edgard had flared up and challenged him outright. Kenton wasn't fit to lead men. That was why he was here. And the men knew it. It would be very easy to find out which officer they'd follow if it came to a clash. If Kenton chose to try it out . . .

"And Kenton didn't chose," the man laughed. By this time they were again en route. "Instead he steps over like a lamb and orders us to fall in, light marching order. He savvied blame well who we would follow. Like follows like, and he knows there's no yellow in Edgard or us. He'd have us traipsin' to Iloilo if he had his way."

Jean Bradley had also chanced to overhear that quarrel. Edgard did not know why she was suddenly so cold to him. But there wasn't much warmth in her eyes when she looked at Kenton, either. He had disappointed her. She thought she knew why he wanted to go back, and it was a soldier's reason. But he had given in. He had not fought.

She wanted to see him fight.

From the camp of disaster they had started at daybreak, the women unincumbered, the men carrying canteens of water and a scant ration. Before they had plodded many hours they reached the beginning of the foothills.

As they mounted, the country changed. The shallow gullies deepened into ravines and gorges. The fecund swales turned to hard rocky bottoms. Starved shrubs and gray moss crowned the hills. The carpet-like trail changed to blistering rock. And the sun's heat, reflected from that rock turned the air above into a quivering inferno.

The Catobato Mountains were not so far ahead now. Very rugged these mountains are, very precipitous and inhospitable, at points nearly impassable.

At noon they rested awhile in the shade of an overhanging ledge, ate, and started on again. They made three miles an hour, steadily. It was hard on the women, especially on Mrs. Bradley. But they were women at their best, which is to say that they possessed a higher courage than most men know of, and more than muscular endurance. Their spirits drove them, uncomplaining.

And so they kept on until about three o'clock, when they reached the oval plateau that marked the highest point of their climb. On either side were now jagged peaks, desolate mountain tops, black, barren, ruinous. Ahead of them forbidding cliffs rose like a solid wall. But in the middle of that wall was a great triangular gash, broad at the top, a very narrow trail at the bottom.

This was Illana Pass, the only near-by gateway to the sea. It was ten miles from Malabang.

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The party was half-way across this plateau when one of the men, looking back, discovered that Kenton had been right, that the plan of their venomous enemy had borne fruit, and that their end was probably near.

The natives were coming silently, which is not their custom. Their play was to get to the Americans before the Americans got to the pass. There were about a hundred of them, and half of the hundred carried rifles.

The men started running, two of them helping Mrs. Bradley. Edgard was at Jean's elbow. The Malanaos instantly opened fire, but the range was too great. A spent bullet started Lieutenant Kenton's cheek bleeding.

Kenton halted them at the narrowest point in the pass, about a hundred yards within, and started them building a barricade of loose rocks. They would have done the same thing without his orders. Edgard placed the women out of range behind a boulder. Then he went back and found Kenton furiously busy helping the men.

The Malanaos stopped at the mouth of the pass and began to pepper the growing barricade with investigative rifle shots. The men worked more cautiously, stooping low. They tried a few answering shots, but there seemed nothing to aim at, and Kenton stopped the waste of cartridges.

They worked almost silently. One of them said, "Well, we'll get a-plenty of them before they get us, anyway." And the others nodded and grunted agreement.

That was the way they took it. There was no discussion; there was nothing to discuss. They were safe but they were trapped. If they tried to get away, they would be overwhelmed in the open. If they stayed where they were, death would come with darkness. And darkness was not four hours away.

For no one who has fought the Mohammedan Malay will accuse him of cowardice, or boast of superiority over him in the use of the edged weapon. When night came, the Malanaos would rush. The white men would be buried deep in a wave of brown flesh and hacked to pieces by razor-edged blades. And the white women . . .

Well, they would die too, of course. They would see to that themselves.

Only Kenton, stopping a moment to rest, asked a foolish question.

"What are we going to do?" he put to Edgard.

"Do!" Edgard laughed mirthlessly. "Why, fight. What can we do?"

Kenton went to work again, his forehead knitted perplexedly.

Material was plentiful, and they soon had a wall of rock breast high, pierced suitably with loopholes. The men quit work, squatted on the ground, and began to pass low-toned and gloomy remarks. They were denied the soldier's customary resort at such moments. They could not put on the jester's mask. They were not to die alone.

Kenton, crouching low for shelter from the bullets that still came intermittently, edged up to Edgard.

"There's the women," he said. "But of course you've been thinking of them, have been thinking of them all along.—We've got to save them."

"I wish you'd tell me how," replied Edgard with a flash of his old impatience.

"Well, I've been thinking. It seems simple enough, only there's a question: how many men do you think it would take to hold this pass?"

"Why, why—" Suddenly Edgard's puzzled face broke into a smile. "Of course," he cried eagerly. "Fine! Why didn't I think of that? Half of us will stay and half go. I'll go if you like, thank you, Kenton."

"Half of us? It seems that's too many to sacrifice."

With a plainly visible effort of the will, Kenton thrust his head over the barricade and began studying the smooth, straight walls and floor of the pass. A bullet whined close to his ear. His muscles reacted with a jerk but he completed his observation.

"One man ought to be enough," he suggested, getting under cover again.

"*One* man!" And everybody stared at Kenton incredulously.

"Why, yes." Kenton managed to speak almost casually, though his eyes were eager and his voice hoarse. "He ought to be able to hold them back. For an hour, say. That would be long enough."

"Well," Edgard agreed unwillingly, "you may be right. I guess you are. But it doesn't seem proper——"

"Of course we'll elminiate the enlisted men," interrupted Kenton quickly. "It's officers' work."

That suited and didn't suit the enlisted men. They stirred uneasily and began deprecating the suggestion among themselves. A fair toss-up for everybody was

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good enough, they agreed. Only the women, who had come from behind their boulder, were silent, knowing the officers' code. But Jean Bradley's eyes were very bright.

"Yes, it's officers' work," agreed Edgard again, but with a curious note in his voice. (Was Kenton trying to trap him to his death?)

"Well then," said Kenton evenly, "I'm senior officer. It's naturally up to me."

"Up to you to do what?" tensely.

"To stay, of course."

The thing was absolutely unexpected to every one there but one. Her heart gave a great bound. So this was Kenton, the coward! But Egard was expostulating.

"No, no. That isn't fair. Seniority has nothing whatever to do with it. Tell you what, there's only one thing to do. We'll draw lots."

It is the orthodox thing to do in such a case, and Kenton knew it. After a moment he agreed. But he had done some quick thinking in the interval.

"Very well. But we've got to be quick. How shall we draw? No sticks or straws here—but I have it."

From the breast pocket of his blouse he drew a vial filled with quinine capsules. Removing the cork, he shook two capsules into his left hand. Then he restored the bottle, drew one of the capsules apart, and sifted out the quinine.

"I'll hold them," he said to Edgard. "You draw. The empty capsule wins life. Is that fair?"

"It suits me," said Edgard, looking with a sort of fascination at Kenton's palm.

"All right—but wait a minute. You men," to the crouching, interested group, "Simpson and Kendall and Sparks, answer that fire. See if you can't pick off some of them. It'll discourage them. And you two, build up the barricade a little higher here. And make a loophole here. The man that stays won't have any time——"

"Now!" he returned to Edgard. "What was it we agreed? The man that draws the empty capsule goes."

Jean, who had watched Kenton intently, started impulsively and seemed about to cry out. But she did not.

Edgard turned his back, reached behind him, and picked a capsule from Kenton's half-closed hand. His own hand trembled slightly as he held it up in the sunlight.

It was empty.

"You see—I'm lucky," said Kenton, slipping his own fatal drawing back into his blouse pocket without looking at it.

Edgard looked dazed.

"Old man," he began, "I—I—oh, hang it! There's nothing I can say, but——"

"That's all right, of course. And the sooner you get started the better, you know. I'll need about half the ammunition, I think."

There was nothing Edgard could do but get his party away as speedily and silently as possible.

And within two minutes they were gone. It was a very embarrassed leave-taking. The men and one of the women seemed almost ashamed to take Kenton's offered hand. Jean Bradley's face was pure agony.

Perhaps she should have been glad. It was some such thing as this she had prayed for. Some great white pinnacle of self-sacrificing courage upon which Kenton might prove himself to all men! But now her vision was fulfilled, she saw it through blurring tears.

Not that she would have it otherwise. She could if she chose. But not for her own selfish love—yes, she thought the word now—would she abate a jot of Kenton's glory.

A long handclasp and they parted.

One of the men, moving away, muttered to another in a tone of incredulous amazement the word with which Kenton had been stigmatized so long, the damning epithet "Yellow."

Kenton heard it. With a strange smile on his white face, he sprawled down where he meant to die, and thrust his rifle through a loophole of the barricade.

HOOF-BEATS in the night!

Pounding, pounding, pounding, the ominous rumble of a hundred horses. Rattling scabbards, flapping leather, deep-panting animals, a long dark column of them that rushed past under the stars striking out fire with their iron shoes. Riders silent, terribly, grimly silent, their short carbines held at the ready. And near the head of the column one who rode like a man, but whose hair had become loosened and flowed dark in the wind behind her, like a streaming banner of vengeance.

It was Jean Bradley, whom neither officers' counsel nor mother's command had been able to hold in Malabang when the punitive expedition set out.

Punitive expedition, for of course there

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was absolutely no chance of rescue. It had been nearly dark when the fugitives reached the garrison. It was an hour later when the troop of cavalry, just arrived at Malabang had gotten under way. Now they were within a mile of Illana Pass, but their only hope concerning Kenton was that he had been favored with a swift death, and concerning the Malanaos, that they might overtake them and send as many as possible to the *juramentados'* paradise that they craved.

Concerning Jean? Well, they were rough men, these, and it was years since some of them had touched a white woman's hand. Was it because of this that lips tightened and hands clenched and eyes moistened at thought of her? Or was there that in her hopeless quest, and in the splendor of her unashamed love, that would have turned any man's heart to reverence?

On and on and on, and the towering cliffs closed on either side, and they were through the mouth of the pass. And now more slowly, for the way was uneven and the bends frequent and the barricade lay somewhere ahead. Slower, but still at a jogging trot. And then a halt.

The barricade was there, but a greater barricade. It did not need Jean Bradley's sharp involuntary cry to tell those in the front of the column that. Before them rocks were piled convulsively higher than a man's head. And the way they were heaped, highest at one side and with broken fragments scattered widely, told the story of a landslide.

The men dismounted, and, with not an order needed, began to drag away the stones. Jean Bradley stood to one side watching them, her bosom heaving, waiting in an agony for what each rock's removal might disclose.

Those of the men who could not work for lack of room clambered cautiously over the barrier, and presently were translating from the ghastly signs left upon the ground the story of Kenton's hopeless fight.

"He beat back one charge, anyway. Here's where he dropped one of the devils within ten feet of him, and here another, and here another. Wonder what they've done with the bodies?"

"Then they must 'a tried strategy. See the way these big rocks've been pushed along the ground. There was a gugu behind every one of them, usin' them like a shield. Sure, and there's a bit of blood behind every one of them now."

"There was considerable infantry dueling, too, by the looks of things out here. Gee, that Kenton must be a crack shot, or these assassins mighty poor at takin' cover."

"Must *have been*, you mean. For, of course, they got him at last. And here's they way they did, here's the way they got up the cliff. The Malanao's worse than a goat. Suppose they couldn't lug their rifles along, which is why they buried him with rocks."

"Gee, I'd hate to die that way. But it's better'n bein' taken prisoner."

"Maybe he was taken prisoner, after all. They ain't found him yet. But—Lord, they found something!"

It was not a shout the men had heard, nor a groan. Indefinable was the sound that went up from the searchers on the other side of the barricade as they saw their search was ended. It was like a cry of hope so amazedly and freshly aroused that its major part was fear. And those of the explorers who were able to get back quickly, joined in that cry.

From a sort of crypt formed by the rounded surface of the only large boulder that had fallen, and the side of the original barricade, they had drawn Kenton's limp body. Over him bent the regimental surgeon, and the figure with flowing hair.

Presently the surgeon straightened up.

"He must have thrown himself flat by the side of the barricade when he saw the boulder coming, and that saved him. Then the rest of the slide followed the boulder, and covered everything. He's shot twice, but he needs air more than anything now. Stand back and give it to him."

And Jean Bradley, too, obeyed the order. But first into Kenton's breast pocket she put her hand, and before restoring it she pressed to her lips a curious thing, the second empty quinine capsule, with which Kenton had forced the hand of Fate.

"Yellow!" muttered one of the men. "The Sixteenth's right, all right. Pure gold!"

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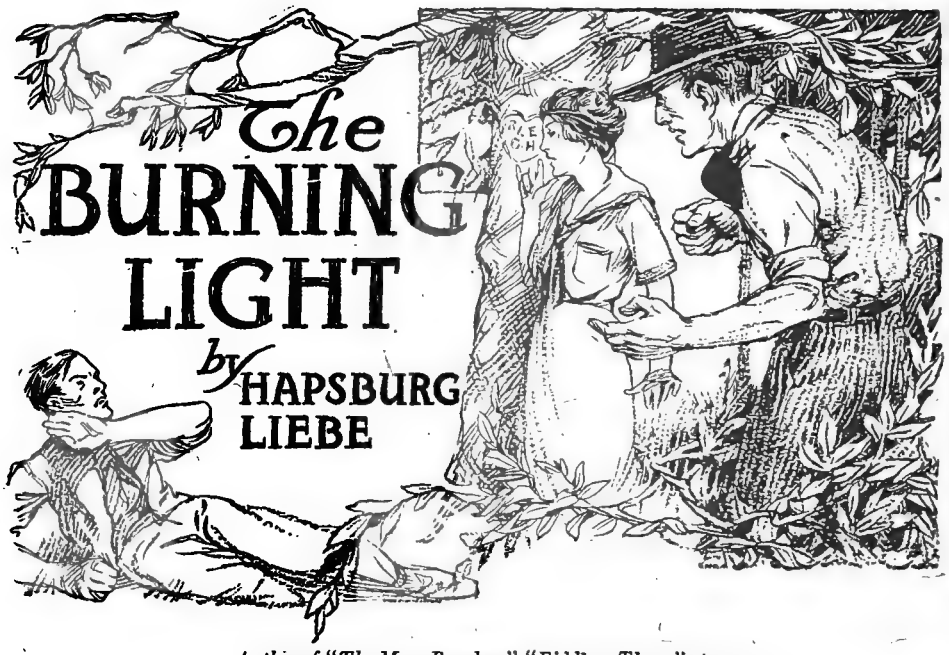

The BURNING LIGHT

by HAPSBURG LIEBE

Author of "The Man Breaker," "Fiddlers Three," etc.

THE champion timberjack fighter of the Bad Ax Mountains logging-camps had always been a Mayland. The Maylands were mountain folk, and they had been a fighting people long before the coming of the logging operations; it was by reason of this that their members had dwindled to a mere score. In the glorious past, every man of them had been a chief in himself, and that clan of chiefs had hung together as if they were chained together. They had been a strong people in the old days.

There were left two of the Mayland Charleys, Big Laurel Charley and Rock Creek Charley; they were both young men, stalwart and iron-muscled, iron-willed young men. It was the latter-named of these who fought all comers at the Little Bad Ax Valley logging-camp and never remembered a whipping at the hands of any man.

Rock Creek Charley had only the faintest recollection of his mother; his father had died years before with boots on. A pair of stern and wifeless uncles had brought him up from boyhood, and they had not failed to teach him that victory was a seventh heaven of achievement; that defeat was everlasting disgrace. The uncles had also taught him that woman was merely a necessary evil—though not necessary to him. So he believed that woman was a weakling, a somebody who couldn't keep her mouth shut though it were to save her life; and that her main value lay in her ability to prepare good things for strong men to eat. He was very strictly a man's man.

Then one Rosa Lee Ellison, who lived just a mile from the Little Bad Ax Valley logging-camp, met Rock Creek Charley and completely changed his views concerning womankind. She had long known of his deeply rooted contempt of her sex, and she deliberately set herself to charm him.

Rosa Lee was a belle, and she deserved to be a belle. The business of fascinating young Mayland succeeded so quickly that it amazed and flattered her. But she too fell into the trap—she fell in love with Rock Creek Charley! Rosa Lee was not much to be blamed for that, for Mayland was an exceedingly fine-looking young brute of a man, And he did have his good points, bad as he was.

Much as she loved the timberjack champion, however, Rosa Lee Ellison kept her wits about her. She realized very clearly the difficulties that lay between them and marriage. Her father and her mother would

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surely object; there was scarcely room to believe that they wouldn't cast her off the moment she changed her name. Rosa Lee herself doubted the advisability of her marrying one of the fighting Maylands. And then . . .

There was Donner Henley who lived over on Twisting Creek, and who loved her almost to madness. He was worth a great deal more in this world's goods than the average mountaineer, and Rosa Lee was only human and therefore quite fond of nice things to wear. Besides, Henley owned a real frame house, which was painted.

Five terms at a mission school had made Rosa Lee very different, in a number of ways, from most hill girls. She never went barefooted, even in Summertime, and she spoke with passing fair English, and she wore her chestnut-brown hair on her head and not hanging down her back.

But in spite of it all she had been meeting Rock Creek Charley Mayland each Sunday afternoon at a great white beech that stood not far below her father's rambling, honeysuckle-covered cabin on the side of Little Bad Ax.

She was there now, waiting, and she was somewhat upset. For she had found, on the body of the beech, the freshly cut initials, R. L. E. and D. H.; and around them, also freshly cut, was a very one-sided outline of a heart.

"If Charley sees that, he'll make trouble," said Rosa Lee aloud.

Slow footfalls sounded in the leaves behind her, and she faced about to see the lanky, flashily dressed figure of Donner Henley, who had not three minutes before finished cutting the letters and the crude heart. He was smiling; and it was the smooth and oily smile of a man whose strength lies in his cunning.

"I guess you'd better go off home, Donner," Rosa Lee declared. There was an unusual glitter in her fine brown eyes.

"Why?" demanded Henley. He had never been to a mission school, and he spoke in very broad hill dialect. "I hain't never done nothin' for ye to talk to me thataway, Rosa Lee. I'll bet you come down here to meet that thar low-down Rock Creek Charley!"

"He may be bad," admitted Rosa Lee. "But he's not low-down. He's always been clean. He's honest in his meanness, anyway. You never knew him to break his word, or tell a lie, or anything like that."

Henley stared. Rosa Lee wished he would go. Charley Mayland was due at any minute, and if he found Henley annoying her—well, she dreaded the consequences.

"Aw, Rock Creek hain't so much!" suddenly blazed Henley. "He hain't never licked me yit. I could ha' fit him, I reckon, ef I had ha' wanted to dirty my hands. Rosa Lee, I——"

FROM his hiding-place behind a clump of blooming laurel, Mayland had heard it all. He had watched Henley cut the letters and the heart in the white bark of the beech. Now he sprang from his hiding-place and with one lightning-like blow sent Donner Henley reeling for twenty feet and to a fall on his back. Then he stood there smiling, which was no sign that he was in a gentle mood, and waited for Henley to get up.

"I'll wash your hands for you, with lye soap, if you'll get up and fight me, Donner," he said quietly.

"Don't, Charley!" pleaded Rosa Lee. "Don't!"

"I beg pardon," quickly. "I forgot. You, Donner, you get up and get away from here."

Years of constant association with Yankee superintendents and Yankee woods foremen had given to him the same almost correct English that the mission school had given to Rosa Lee Ellison. This had been one of the things that had drawn them together.

Donner Henley rose frightenedly and hurried away.

"He's gone for a gun," warned Rosa Lee.

"No," smiled Rock Creek Charley. "He had one in his pocket. He knows better than to shoot an unarmed Mayland. There are a few other Maylands, you know. Big Laurel, for instance. But Donner'll bring your dad. So I'll say what I came to say——why won't you marry me, Rosa Lee?"

The girl knew that she could no longer put him off; that the time had come when she must tell him the truth plainly; and she very much disliked the doing of it. For a moment she stood there eying his stalwart form silently.

He had on new corduroys, new laced boots, a new blue flannel shirt and a new broad-rimmed black felt hat. He had bought them, of course, that he might appear before her neatly clothed.

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"For one thing," she murmured tremulously, "it's my people. For another thing, Charley, it—it's you. You fight so much, and I hate fighting. It's brutal. It's outlandish. And—you drink some, Charley, and you swear."

Mayland went a little pale, hung his dark head and said nothing for a whole minute.

"I might ha' known it," he said when he did speak. "Well, put me on trial for a year. I've whipped other men; I can whip myself—for you. If I drink a drop, or fight a fight, or swear a swear, turn me down flat; if I keep the faith, marry me. What do you say? Make it plain, in one word."

"No," said Rosa Lee; and her heart smote her heavily. "No."

She watched him closely, to see how he took it. He went paler. Then he dropped to one knee, perhaps the first Mayland that ever knelt to anything, took one of her hands and kissed it reverently.

"I'm glad, anyway, that I met you," he said evenly; "and as long as I live I'll love you. Good-by."

He rose and went toward the logging-camp in the valley below, and to the girl his step seemed somehow lifeless. When the blooming laurels were about to hide him from her eyes, Rosa Lee ran after him, calling, calling tearfully:

"Charley! Charley! Wait!"

He halted and turned. She ran up to him.

"I can't do it," she half sobbed. "I can't let you go this way. I'll put you on trial for a year. But don't see me often. They'll watch me, for Donner'll tell all he knows. And I'm going to take your word for it all, Charley."

A happy light broke over Mayland's strong, sunburned face. He caught her hands to his breast.

"No Mayland," he smiled, "ever broke his word."

Rosa Lee looked down, looked up, looked down again and blushed very prettily.

"I—I wouldn't m-m-mind," she stammered, "if—if you'd kiss me once."

He took her slender, roundish figure in his big arms and kissed her. Then he went down through the green woodland singing, singing an old, old love-song of the hills.

When his voice had died away to her ears, Rosa Lee turned homeward and found herself facing Donner Henley. Henley had not gone to tell her father, not yet. He had eavesdropped.

"Rock Creek kissed you!" he upbraided. "Rock Creek kissed you!"

Rosa Lee elevated her nose in defiance and in contempt.

"It's a thing you can never say about yourself!" she replied spiritedly; and she went on toward her father's cabin.

Charley Mayland ambled leisurely to the camp clearing, and not long afterward he went to the big upstairs room of the rough and unpainted boarding-house. In there the beds of the loggers were arranged in two rows, making it appear somewhat like the ward of a hospital.

Mayland at once found himself beset by temptation. Natty Pepperell had just exchanged half a month's wages for an oaken keg of golden pippin brandy, which had stood untouched in Grandpap Keefer's cabin cellar for twenty-one years, and he was treating every man he saw to a pint or so of the honey-colored spirits. Even Superintendent Frazier had taken a long drink of it, and no timberjack had ever seen Frazier drink brandy before.

"It's sure as rich as cream, Rock Creek," said Pepperell, who, with flushed cheeks and eyes as affectionate as a hound's, stood holding out a gourd dipper almost full of the mellow old stuff. "He'p ye-yeself, Rock. I mean every drap o' this here for you, Rock, old—old darlin', old sweetness!"

"Much obliged," said Mayland. "I'll not take any, I reckon."

The other timberjacks stared in amazement. While Mayland had never been a hard drinker, he had rarely refused a drink. And to turn down such brandy as that—brandy old enough to vote and as pure as the morning's dew, brandy that had never even been in the vicinity of a contaminating revenue stamp—it was a most unbelievable thing!

"What's the matter, Rock Creek?" asked Foreman Hendrix, thickly and wonderingly.

"Nothing," faintly smiled Mayland. "Nothing's the matter. I'm done with drinking, that's all."

At that instant Donner Henley entered the sleeping-quarters of the timberjacks. He saw, and he understood perfectly—thanks to his eavesdropping. Said Henley in a loud and sneering voice:

"It's Delilah, boys! Delilah she has done cut yore Samson's hair! A beetlebug could lick yore Samson now!"

He advanced boldly toward the as yet

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undefeated champion of all the Bad Ax Mountains logging-camps. The onlookers held their breath. While they had never worked with Henley, they knew him slightly, and they wondered at this sudden show of that which they looked upon as courage. They expected to see him half killed at the hands of their great fighter.

But Rock Creek Charley made no move toward the man who, as it appeared to him, had spoken insolently of his sweetheart. He only stared at Henley; but his eyes blazed, and his face was as pale as death itself could have made it.

"That'll be about enough from you, Donner, I guess," he finally said in a voice that sounded bleak and white. "If you want to fight me, why didn't you fight me when I knocked you down less than an hour ago?"

"That's what I'm mad about," gritted Henley, which was truth. And then he sprang forward and struck Mayland a blow that almost floored him.

Rock Creek Charley didn't strike back, neither did he swear, though he wanted to strike back, and he wanted to swear. Almost, in that black and terrible moment of extremity, did he forget his promise to Rosa Lee. Henley, of course, wished that Mayland would strike him; then Rosa Lee would turn Mayland down, and he would have a clear field.

"That's the bully o' this here whole country!" leered Henley. "I've hit him, and he won't even try to fight me! You're a low-down coward, Rock Creek. You're a cussed milk-and-water sop!"

A murmur ran through the crowd of wide-eyed loggers. They could hardly believe their own eyes and ears. Then they began to press toward the former champion.

"What's wrong, Rock Creek?" demanded Foreman Hendrix. "You're not sick, are you?"

"Sick?" Mayland repeated the word absentmindedly. Then he straightened. "No, I'm not sick. I've quit fighting, that's all. It's brutal. It's outlandish. But Henley there is no fighter. Somebody call his bluff. He——"

"Oh, I ain't a wantin' to fight anybody but you," interrupted Henley; for he saw that his bluff was about to be called. "I jest wanted to show this here outfit 'at I could thrash the champeen. He's quit fightin'. He's—he's—" Henley became tangled, stopped, caught hold of himself and went on, "Delilah has done cut his hair!"

"What d'ye mean 'Delilah cut his hair'?" snapped a slender young hillman who had worshiped Rock Creek Charley.

"Ask Rock!" leered Henley.

They looked toward Mayland for an explanation. But Mayland explained nothing. Not for anything would he drag Rosa Lee's name through the mouths of all those men. Perhaps it was fortunate for Henley that he didn't.

Mayland's intimates resented his silence, and soon he fell into hard lines. His former friends very quickly became his enemies, for none of them could understand. He was sneered at, even by his superintendent. He became the pariah of the camp.

When those who were left of the fighting Maylands heard of it, they refused to permit his name spoken in their households.

And all this happened in less than two days.

ON MONDAY night, Rock Creek Charley went to bed early because of the gibes of the timberjacks downstairs. Donner Henley had asked for a job, and it had been given to him; it was Henley, of course, who led in the persecution of the erstwhile favorite.

Charley lay there in his bed by a low window, thinking, thinking, in the darkness. The whipping of himself by himself was a bigger thing than he had thought it would be. Perhaps, he reasoned, he had better go somewhere else to work, and leave temptation behind. He had almost decided that he would do this, when his eyes caught sight of a light that was burning in one of the windows of old Job Ellison's cabin a mile away, on the side of Little Bad Ax, and he suddenly remembered that he had seen that light there late the night before. Then he knew.

He knew it as well as if Rosa Lee herself had told him. That burning light was there to remind him of his promise to Rosa Lee, and to remind him that her happiness, as well as his, was at stake. No, he wouldn't go somewhere else to work; he wouldn't be a quitter.

Rock Creek Charley sat up in his bed and stared at the tiny point of flame for an hour almost without moving. Then he heard the timberjacks coming noisily up the stairs, coming to their beds, and he lay himself down

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and drew his blanket over his shoulders. And before they reached the upper floor, he closed his eyes and muttered a little thickly:

"God Almighty, give me strength to beat hell right square out of myself. Amen."

The loggers entered the big, dark room, and leading them was the lanky, half-reeling figure of Donner Henley. Somebody lighted the big oil lamp that hung in the center of the room and swore because the match burned his fingers. Henley pointed a forefinger toward Mayland.

"Look at 'um!" Henley cried drunkenly. "Look at the sleepin' beauty! For a copper cent I'd wallop 'um!"

He went to Rock Creek Charley's bed and dragged him, in his underclothing, to the floor and kicked him brutally. Mayland's hot blood rushed to his brain and maddened him. He rose as a panther rises. His teeth, big white teeth, set in the inner edge of his lower lip, and a trickle of blood ran down his chin and dropped to his undershirt.

His hands clenched. He could bear no more. He would kill Donner Henley. With those powerful hands of his he would break every accursed bone in Donner Henley's body.

He thought of the burning light; he turned and saw it, the star that his Rosa Lee had set in the blackness to guide him, and it saved him.

His voice came low—

"Please, Donner, don't."

A great, strapping brute of a man entered the room, a man who was no timberjack, though he wore the clothing of a timberjack. It was a Mayland. He strode straight to Donner Henley, caught him by the neck and by a trouserleg and lifted him seven feet in the air, preparatory to dashing him to the floor. Rock Creek Charley sprang toward his cousin.

"You mustn't!" he cried. "Big Laurel, you mustn't!"

Big Laurel Charley Mayland flung Henley to a near-by bed as a child might have flung a doll, and faced his kinsman angrily.

"What the devil's come over you, Rock Creek?" he thundered. "I'm here to find out. Spit it!"

"I've quit fighting," readily.

Big Laurel Charley straightened and swelled until he appeared to have the height and the breadth of a Goliath.

"You've—what? You, a Mayland, you've quit fightin'! You fool, don't you know you cain't live without fightin'? No more'n ye can live without breathin'!"

There was nothing for Rock Creek Charley to say. He found a blue bandanna and with it wiped the blood from his mouth and his chin, and crept back under his blanket. The visitor stalked from the room, ashamed, ashamed of the other Charley Mayland. The timberjacks undressed and went to bed.

CAME days and weeks of relentless, merciless torture for the pariah, torture that he could not have borne had it not been for the tiny star that Rosa Lee faithfully set in the blackness each night. Then there came a Sunday afternoon when he stole to the white beech that stood not far below Job Ellison's cabin, in the hope that he would find Rosa Lee there.

And he did find her there. She was expecting him. He made himself stand up proudly and straight before her, and he made himself assume a carefree manner; it was not in a Mayland to complain of a thing that he had willingly taken upon himself. She went to him joyously, and he took her in his arms and kissed her.

"You're making good, Charley," she told him happily.

She knew that the way of his reformation was hard, but she didn't know of the real magnitude of his difficulties.

"Thanks to the burning light," he smiled. "Keep it there for me, Rosa Lee. I—I might be sorely tempted to—er, to fight, you know." Not for anything would he whine.

"I thought you'd see it," she said, "and I thought you'd understand."

In the laurels near by a lanky, mean excuse for a man heard and bit his lip. How one could be like Charley Mayland was utterly beyond his feeble powers of reasoning. Donner Henley did not become in the least ashamed of himself for his littleness. He sat there hidden and drank in every one of their honeyed words, and they maddened him. Once he had his revolver leveled toward Rock Creek Charley's back.

That night Donner Henley decided that he would kill Rock Creek Charley. It was very evident that that was the only available means of separating Mayland and Rosa Lee. Henley's cunning told him that he had better make Mayland's death appear to be an accident. So Henley put his narrow wits to

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work, and the result was a plan that gave promise of quick and complete success.

The pariah had been taken out of a gang of cutters and put at running a steam log-skidder that was extremely hard to fire. Firemen had come and gone almost daily. The next time a man fell down, Donner Henley applied for the job and got it. Foreman Hendrix thought Henley wished to be near Rock Creek Charley in order that he might tantalize him, and Foreman Hendrix didn't care a fig. But Henley had a far more dastardly thing than that in view.

It was a fine morning toward the last of Summer when Donner Henley took charge of the firing of Mayland's skidder. The set was low in the head of a cove that was so thickly timbered that the sunlight reached its bottom only in thinly sprinkled golden patches. Henley threw in a few sticks of dry birch, shut the furnace door with a bang, and grinned insolently at Mayland.

"You've shore got a fireman now, you Samson what was afore Delilah cut off yore hair!"

Mayland saw a signal from the cable man, gave the whistlecord two short jerks and grasped the throttle and the clutch lever. The twin engines roared, and a great log came crashing through the underbrush. When the log lay within reach of the loader boom, Mayland turned to Henley.

"She steams easy with low water, but low water is dangerous," he said quietly. "Keep plenty of water, Donner."

From his place beside the cable drums, he couldn't see the glass; neither could he see the steam-gage from where he stood.

Henley worked hard, and he steamed the skidder. About the middle of the afternoon of the following day, he slyly shaved half a bar of soap and slipped it into the water-supply barrel, and the injector licked it up greedily. The boiler foamed, and appeared to have a full three gages of water when it really had less than a tenth of a gage, and the fire was roaring furiously.

Mayland was suspicious of his fireman, but he didn't think of soap. Then his engine-cylinders began to pound with the slush of the foaming water, and he yelled frantically over his shoulder:

"Hi there! She's pulling over water, Donner!"

There was no response. Again he shouted, and still there was no response. He stopped a great poplar half way, turned and looked. Henley was nowhere in sight. Then he leaped from the platform to the ground and ran for his life.

But he was a little too late. With a roar that shook the hills themselves the skidder's bottle-shaped boiler exploded, and a white cloud of warm steam enveloped him. At the same time some flying thing of iron struck the back of his head, and he fell face downward in the underbrush and lay still.

Henley and a gang of cutters hastened to the scene after the wind had blown the soap-scented steam away. Henley had barely saved his own life by going after fresh wood, he declared. They found poor unconscious Rock Creek Charley, put him aboard an empty logging-flat, and took him down to the camp boarding-house and to his bed. A geared locomotive went sputtering toward the lowland for a doctor.

WHEN Mayland came to it was night, and the doctor had not come. Mayland's head throbbed dully and he was delirious. Above him stood his superintendent and a number of his persecutors and among them was Donner Henley. They bent toward him when he opened his eyes, but only Super Holman Frazier seemed penitent. Mayland put a hand to his bandaged head, remembered the explosion vaguely, and turned his gaze upon the sober face of Frazier.

"Get those polecats away from me, super," he said queerly. "If I die, let me die in peace."

Frazier waved his hand, and the room cleared of timberjacks. Then he drew up a home-made chair and sat down beside Mayland's bed.

Rock Creek Charley looked toward the superintendent with eyes that were half wild with delirium.

"You go too, super," he mumbled. "If I die, let me die in peace."

Frazier muttered something about being sorry, and regretfully left the room.

Mayland rose on an elbow and stared through the darkness toward old Job Ellison's cabin on the side of Little Bad Ax, a mile away. The light was there, burning for him. But it was dimmer than it had ever been before. And it changed color: now it was as red as blood, now it was as yellow as gold, now it was as white as snow. Then he fancied that he saw his Rosa Lee, and that

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she was beckoning, beckoning; and he fancied that he heard her voice calling:

"Come to me and the light, Charley. Come to me and the light."

He sat up unsteadily and put out his arms toward the vision that lived only in his fevered brain.

"I'm coming, Rosa Lee," he said deliriously. "I'm coming to you and the light."

They had not taken off his clothing, not even his high-laced boots. He crept from his bed and stole unsteadily down the back stairway. And nobody saw him go.

ROSA LEE ELLISON had heard the boiler explosion that afternoon, and she had heard of Mayland's being hurt by it. She would have gone to her sweetheart had not her parents kept her at home behind a fastened door.

Night drew near, and Rosa Lee sat by her window and cried. With the coming of darkness, she thought of the lamp; she brought it hurriedly, put it in its nightly place on the table and lighted it. If Charley were still alive, he would look for it. And then she noted that the oil was almost gone from the glass bowl.

Her father and her mother wouldn't let her out to get oil, neither would they bring her oil; she'd better go to bed, they told her. She pleaded, to no avail; they wouldn't even answer her. So she sat by the window, watching the lamp's flame and turning the wick up now and then, and wondered what Charley would think if the light went out.

The oil and the wick together lasted for two hours. Rosa Lee would have been frantic if she had known that her sweetheart was staggering through the black laurels toward the beacon, staggering over rough stones and falling frequently. Had he become lost there is no telling what might have happened.

The lamp sputtered fitfully and went out. A moment later Rosa Lee heard her name called smotheredly, queerly, from somewhere near the gate. She rose, wide-eyed. She heard her father's heavy footsteps, heard the cabin's front door creak open, heard her father's challenging voice—

"Who's thar?" sharply.

The answer was the fall of a man's body on the cabin's honeysuckle-covered front porch.

Job Ellison gave the lamp to his wife and bent over the still, corduroy-clad figure.

"Rock Creek Charley Mayland!" he exclaimed.

He half carried, half dragged the unconscious timberjack to a hand-carved black walnut bed. His wife frightenedly put the lamp on the high, smoked mantel and hurried to unfasten the door that held her daughter virtually a prisoner. Rosa Lee ran to Mayland, caught his hands in hers and held them close.

"Water!" she choked. "Mother, bring cold water and wet his face——"

Her mother turned to obey. Job Ellison found a lantern, lighted it, and hurried toward the logging-camp in the valley below. When he came back, the lowland doctor and Superintendent Holman Frazier were with him.

Out of the mouth of Holman Frazier, Rosa Lee learned the whole story of Mayland's persecution, and Rosa Lee cried and blamed herself heavily for the unmanning of Rock Creek Charley. When Job Ellison and his wife knew everything, they very readily reversed their opinions of Mayland.

Frazier and the doctor rose to leave at daybreak. Mayland was resting very well; he had every chance, the doctor said, of a quick and entire recovery, provided he had good nursing.

"He'll get it," declared Rosa Lee.

"When he wakes," said the superintendent in parting, "you might tell him I need a woods foreman who doesn't drink, and that he can have the job."

Frazier had done a great deal of thinking during the long hours just gone. Under the skin, Holman Frazier was a good, big man.

MAYLAND soon began to chafe at being kept in bed, and then he chafed at merely being allowed to sit up. And yet, those were Elysian days for him; Rosa Lee made them that. Job Ellison and his wife did all they could do to make amends.

Charley Mayland figured out exactly the method that Donner Henley had employed in the attempt to kill him. But he mentioned it only to Rosa Lee, and Rosa Lee kept her own counsel and mentioned the matter to nobody else.

Came a certain fine Saturday afternoon in September. The loggers of the Little Bad Ax camp were enjoying their usual weekly half-holiday in the usual manner: they wrestled and boxed in the flat clearing

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around the boarding-house and the commissary. Except Mayland, not a man was missing; even Holman Frazier sat on the boarding-house porch and watched the exhibitions of manly strength—exhibitions that would have attracted notice anywhere. Only Donner Henley, of all the timberjacks, took no part in it; Henley's strength lay in his cunning, and there were weak streaks in that.

Then Rock Creek Charley Mayland walked from the laurels that bordered the edge of the clearing and joined his former associates. He looked better than ever; in every way he was in the very pink of condition; his was the face of an exceedingly happy man. The timberjacks turned their eyes upon him and began to nudge one another. Donner Henley laughed insolently:

"Hello, Samson what was! Whar's Delilah?"

He was standing in the center of the crowd of loggers. Mayland turned slowly, smiling as if carelessly.

"Don't talk like that, Donner," he said. "At least, don't mention the girl."

"Oh, I reckon I'll mention her ef I want to," sneered Henley.

His ratty eyes glowed. He would force Mayland to fight and thereby break his promise to Rosa Lee. He went on—

"You hain't man enough, ye low-down coward, ye milk-and-water sop——"

Rock Creek Charley sent Foreman Hendrix and two loggers reeling in his terrific rush toward Donner Henley. His iron fist closed Henley's slit of a mouth, and blood sprang from the thin, straight lips. There was no resistance whatever; Henley only howled as blow after blow crashed to his face, to his body, everywhere.

"You'll explode my boiler and kill me, will you?" smiled Mayland, with glittering eyes, as he beat Henley almost to insensibility. "Have you arrested for it? I am the law for you!"

He rose over the now prostrate figure and looked defiantly toward certain other timberjacks who had raised their voices against that which he had just done.

"If *you* want a taste o' this, come right on," he invited. "I'm your master. I can lick you all, two at a time. Well, why don't you come on?"

Little Bad Ax camp awoke and cheered him. Once more he was their champion.

Dazedly Henley realized that Big Laurel Charley Mayland and Rosa Lee Ellison had joined the crowd, and that Big Laurel Charley was shaking hands wildly with the other Charley Mayland. Henley rose weakly and staggered toward Rosa Lee.

"He—he's broke his promise," said Henley, pointing to Rock Creek Charley.

"Yes," Rosa Lee replied proudly, "he was even big enough for that! You see, Donner, he had to do it. He had to whip you to keep me from trying to whip you myself!"

THE BEACH-COMBER

BY IRA SOUTH

THEY say, because I walk the sand barefoot
Among a brown-skin people, better I be dead.
My friends made, ages gone, their prophecies,
And now, long since, the last "I told you so" is said.

But, God! They never knew the Spanish Seas,
The regal purple visions weaving fancy spins,
Nor drowsed a tropic-day siesta out—
Let those who ken these things pass judgment on my sins.

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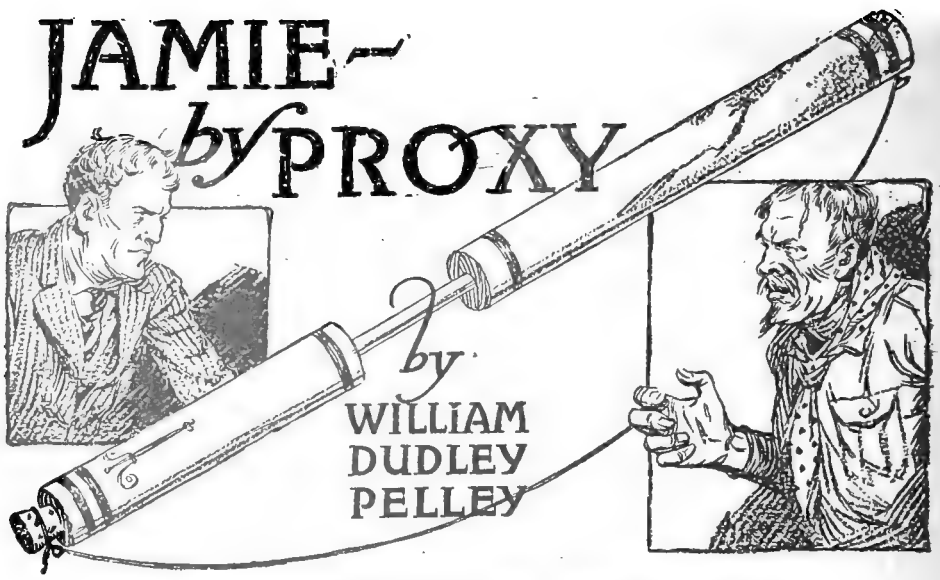
JAMIE—by PROXY



by WILLIAM DUDLEY PELLEY

Author of "The World Next Door," "A Hero, Under Pressure," etc.

"THE curse o' the nation, Pete," declared Siphon Jim, "is the idle rich." The grizzled camp cook laid down the yellow and faded old Provo paper. "I'm sommat o' a socialist, Pete. Wouldn't be no inherited fortunes if I had my way. I guess not! Look at my little Jamie, killed by a million-dollar souse on a joy-ride. Look at you slavin' off up in these mountains for seventeen a month and keep. And all the time, the sons o' them as owns these choppin's is bein' led around Europe in little velvet pants."

"I don't wanner be led around Europe in velvet pants!" protested the alarmed cookee.

"Don't worry, Pete. You won't be. There ain't enough velvet in the universe to make you a pair o' pants. And if there was, you wouldn't get past Ireland anyhow. The Irish has too much sense o' humor. But that's divertin' and digressin', Pete. —— the idle rich, say I. Here's another story in this old Provo paper about an Eastern girl drownin' herself for a man. Rich young guy. Taught her to keep away from Sabbath-school and chauffeur a three-room flat before the law had the kit licensed. Too much money, Pete. If he'd been growin' callouses for a livin' from diapers to safety-razors, he wouldn't had time for such deviltry. —— the idle rich! There never was one that money didn't make a snob. They're the curse o' the Monroe Doctrine, says I."

Pete the sub-cook or "cookee" decorated through life with three-foot bowed legs and a harelip, pared potatoes with a slow shake of his frowzled head.

"Si," said he, "there's good in everybody. Even in Czar Carew I bet there's good. But the folks we calls bad, Si, is them as kicks off before the right situation works round where the Bible in 'em busts out. And rich folks ain't no exception to the rule. You been layin' out the wealthy in lavender ever since you took the job seven years ago. And it ain't because o' money. It's because a rich guy killed your kiddie. Now take you and take me. Suppose we was left a million dollars. Would we be snobs and go round killin' kiddies and leadin' ladies wrong?"

"You might marry one o' 'em!" growled Siphon Jim.

He would have argued his favorite topic further but he suddenly arose from his seat. Two horses had swung into view far down the distant trail. And even at a distance Siphon knew the rider of the foremost for a stranger.

A SLEEPY August sun loitered high above the speaking solitudes of the Wasatch Mountains.

No one has yet described the Wasatch Mountains as no one has ever described the Grand Cañon.

Legend has it that when the Creator

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completed the universe he found thousands of crags and wastes and cañons remaining, millions of fir-trees, multitudes of mountains. In north Utah he stored them, Nature's vast and awesome scrap-heap.

After a long, long time came man. Man saw the timber. The peaks, the crags, the cañons were unnerving. But man had found the timber and timber meant wealth. So came the lumber camps of the Wasatch Mountains.

Man bade *au revoir* to the tinseled mummery in the make-believe universe of the cities. He disappeared far up in ethereal silence. Perhaps in a year and a day he reappeared. Perhaps he did not. No one mattered.

Siphon Jim was one of those men. Siphon Jim had duly bid street-cars, Democratic politicians, cash-registers and ten-cent music farewell. For a year and a day, in fact a great many years and a great many days, Siphon Jim had sat in the sun outside the cook shanty and aggravated himself with memories of a world somewhere at his feet where were barber-shops, love-affairs, comic operas and asphalt-paved municipalities. But when one must ride one hundred and seventy-five miles on the back of a narcotic mule—a six-day journey—to taste these accouterments of culture, and probably lose one's job in the bargain, the alternative is to dream of them in the sun and keep one's job.

In other words, Siphon Jim was one of those men who had not come out. Perhaps he did not wish to come out. A great many men were so inclined.

Therefore the advent of a stranger from those regions back in the years of memories was an occasion.

Pete the cookee threw the pan of half-peeled potatoes indoors in his excitement and cleaned his palms by the simple expedient of scrubbing them promiscuously on his shirt.

"The off-horse has got a saddle!" he exclaimed. "And the saddle's empty!"

The men were afar at their work in the tracts until sundown. On Siphon would devolve the honors. He pulled his Mark Twain facial scenery and waited in mystified excitement for the stranger to come up.

A greyhound of a young man at length slid off. He was dressed in an Eastern Norfolk suit and Jim-Crow hat. The hat was pulled savagely aslant one eye. But more than these, he was dressed in a Face.

His was a remarkable face—features of a man grim with hunting all over the world for something he had failed to discover and each failure whetting the appetite for success a thousand times as strong.

This granite-faced young man stumbled as his feet came in contact with earth and tattled the number of miles he had come in the saddle.

"What camp is this?" he demanded.

"Camp C, Ottumwa Lumber Company," returned Siphon.

Icicle-eyes inventoried the picturesque two appreciatively.

"You'll do!" announced the mysterious stranger. "Evidently I've arrived. I've come through the Spanish Fork Trail."

"You've what?"

"I've come through the Spanish Fork Trail."

"Alone!"

Leaden humor fled for the instant across the arrvial's face as he noted Siphon's glance at the empty saddle.

"I came—alone! Needn't look at the horse. That saddle wasn't to have brought anybody up. It's to take somebody down. Don't ask who—yet!"

The stranger caught the door-casing and swayed a trifle in utter fatigue.

"I thought Utah was all sand and Mormons. And there's more mountains out here than in Vermont. So I didn't take enough fodder. I haven't had hardly a bite since I climbed over the northern end of Strawberry Mountain. Bring food and a pestle. I'll need the pestle to tamp down enough grub."

On a corner of the fifty-foot rough table Siphon spread a meal for an army and one hungry dog.

Came a point where Siphon saw the sinister young man would respond to language. The stranger arose. Uninvited he filled a bulldog pipe from Pete's cracker-jar humidor on the shelf behind the huge stove.

As he prodded the tobacco snug in its bowl, his head rolled groggily from the effect of the abnormal meal he had gorged. But he lit the pipe, straddled the end of the bench and placed his hat among the dishes.

Then with slow deliberate motion he felt his hand around his hip and produced a pug-nosed automatic, black as death. He laid the heavy weapon within handy reach on the table also.

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"What's the idea?" demanded Siphon.

The young man violated every theory of deduction as made popular by our late friend, Sherlock Holmes, and upset every precedent of those tourist-adventurers, one-lungers, semi-criminals or company college men who penetrated the Wasatches in the climb after the unattainable—and sometimes found it.

"The idea is," responded the stranger, "I'm hunting a man!"

"I see," said Siphon. "Officer?"

"No. I'm not an officer. And the queer part of my search is this: I don't know the name of the party I'm after. I knew it back East. But that stands me no good. More than once he's changed it."

"But I suppose," said Siphon with fishy eye, "you got his Bertillion measurements, thumb-prints and likin' for garlic. Speak 'em out. What are they?"

"What do you know about Bertillion measurements and thumb-prints up here?"

"My dear young feller, as an imitation o' them South American Republics where there's no eradication treaties to make 'em hand ninety per cent. o' their census over to the police blotters o' a universe, some o' the Wasatch lumber camps is twin-brothers, tin-types and stereoscope double pictures——"

"You mean extradition treaties."

"I mean eradication treaties. Because the moment a chap hikes into one and goes on the tax list, he's promptly erased from the annals o' human sanguinity.

"There's lots o' brainy men up in this lost corner o' the universe," went on Siphon. "There's men as have run banks and church fairs, soda-fountains and school-boards. There's fellers as can give the theory o' the flood in Hindustan to others as could tell you how many pages the *Policeman's Gazette* contained in its Christmas issue, Eighteen Eighty-nine.

"We got two doctors, three New York motormen, an ex-member o' the Texas bar and a feller who sold hot-dogs in front o' Ginley's saloon on Winter nights in Racine, Wisconsin. There's a feller hidin' here for arguin' the chances o' a Populist victory with an opponent and billet o' stove-wood. And there's a magazine guy with bone glasses and a secret sorrow out here to write the 'truth' and 'real life as it is.'

"That's how we know so much o' the wag o' the world. But take us as a bagful and we're never inconsiderate enough to probe each other's status in humane society before we arrove. If a man cares to divulge it extemporaneously or spiritiously, all well and good. But we never do any newspaper interviewin' o' one another. You see, that shrinkin' from publicity is why we're here—that is, some o' us. And it ain't healthy."

"Yes," said the stranger, "I suspected as much. That's why I've got this gun laid where I can reach it if needed. But I've come up here—a hundred and seventy-five miles—to find a man, and the only way I can do it is to ask questions. What's your name?"

"Siphon Jim. The back one ain't your business."

"Well, Siphon Jim, for the past seven years I've been hunting the Western Hemisphere for this particular male individual. Down in Provo a month ago I stood in a saloon and heard a half-drunken Mexican tell of a Hercules of a man in these mountains. I couldn't catch the name. What interests me is this: this Hercules has a hideous scar from his left eyebrow into his hair. And that scar's so white that it's green. Is there such a man around here?"

Siphon Jim came across softly and took the opposite bench with popping eyes.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Pete. "He means Shootin' Carew!"

"Young feller," whispered Siphon, "you're usin' language too reckless! Do you know who you're after?"

"I'm after a two-hundred-pound man with a scar like a railroad wreck on his forehead. What was that name you called him?"

"That's Shootin' Carew, boss o' the tracts. They call him the Czar o' the Wasatches."

"Then I'm after Shootin' Carew. I want him to go back East with me. That is, if he proves the man that I'm hunting."

"Dead?" asked Siphon.

"Not much! I want him alive."

The fishy twinkle had gone from Siphon's eye. The lean mouth opened, the lower jaw clutched a portion of whisker and tobacco-stained teeth started masticatory operation thereon.

"Why do you want him?" gasped Pete. The cookee was badly scared. Well enough, he knew the boss; the stranger did not.

"Can't exactly tell you why, till I know if he's my man. The only clue I've got is this scar."

"Yes," snarled Siphon, "and don't you go

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askin' Shootin' Carew how he come by that scar."

"Oh, I know what you mean," retorted the stranger, "I've met the breed before. Shooting Carew's a dangerous man. Got so many notches on his gun it looks like the blade of a buck-saw. Rather kill than drink, and draws at the blink of an eyelash. Regular Diamond Dick sort, what?"

"Son," declared Siphon, "if you value life, liberty and the pursuit o' women, don't go inferrin'—much less askin'—you see that Czar Carew has got a scar. Carew's had a past, same as most o' us. And that scar is a ghost o' that past he can't outwalk or outstrangle. Wearin' that scar and bossin' the swine under him has ruined Shootin' Carew's disposition. Whenever a gas-headed scut so deplores discretion he refers in a loud voice to Carew's scar, disposition or authority, Carew never sits down with pencil, paper and latest edition o' Hoyle to prove his mental equipment is model o' 1902. He——"

"Yes, I know," said the stranger, "packs his gun with daylight and the relatives send flowers."

"You bet they do! Maybe you'd say such a thing wasn't allowed in a century where there's book-agents, suspenders and votes for women. But when you're gettin' out timber 'way off in a forsaken corner o' Nowhere with murderers, dolts and greasers, as the feller said when he paddled his woman: 'Discipline's got to be had.' Nine men fell down on this contract before the company found Shootin' Carew. Carew gets out the timber. That's all the company wants. The truck up here ain't got no relatives to appeal to the district attorney, and, while the Czar's as full o' bullet scars as a god is o' fleas, the fellers that riled him—ain't!"

"Don't doubt a word of it," declared the unperturbed stranger. "Yet don't you see I've got to ask him about that scar in order to identify him? If Carew's killed those who've proffered previous queries I take it no one knows his history. I might challenge him by his old name but that wouldn't make him let on unless he wanted. Now, if he's sensitive about that scar and I prod him how he got it, he's bound to give himself away. I've seen it worked before."

"I'm sorry," said Siphon. "I ain't playin' to no grandstand when I ask to what address we'll send the contents o' your pockets. Texas Rangers led by the Kaiser couldn't capture the Blood Boss o' the Wasatches and make him leave the timber. And if you persist just because your nerve is good, there'll be so much powder spilt in this room when you do it, we'll have to lift off the roof to purify the air. It can't be did, sonny. Smarter men than you have tried and smelled o' sweet spices after."

"I calculate," said the stranger, "to hold him up with a gun while I ask him."

Pete glanced at Siphon with sickly smile.

The puerile pity with which the cook and his helper met this statement angered the cold-faced youth.

"You mean this foreman has got more nerve than myself?"

"Sonny," pleaded Siphon, "go slow. Life's mighty sweet. I don't know your game, but you're dead—dead as Jael's job o' human carpentry—if you go noticin' Carew's scar. You got stomach. I see it in your jaw. But you ain't half so game as Carew is sensitive about that scar."

"We're talking in circles," declared the stranger. "I suppose Carew eats in this room tonight? I've hunted seven years for a man of this reputation with such a scar. I'm not the kind to show yellow when it comes to the kill. If he eats here tonight let me sleep round here somewhere and we'll see who's got most nerve."

"Sonny," asked the shrewd Siphon, "is there a woman in it?"

"Yes," admitted the stranger reluctantly, "there's a woman in it."

"I thought so," muttered Siphon, "bad business! Bad business!"

But the old cook chanced to glance across the table. His eyes met those of the stranger. Neither pair of eyes faltered.

No, neither pair of eyes faltered nor fell. And in that half-minute inventory the world-wise old camp cook took the lad's measure of soul, and found nothing amiss.

Siphon had made sport of the magazine man with the secret sorrow, out to write life as it is. That was because the man was as much an absurdity as his sorrow or mission.

Here, evidently, was a youngster with a real secret sorrow. It harked deep in those granite-gray eyes where slowly a man-to-man appeal for help was beginning to glow.

And beneath the magnetism of that glance, emotions began to come into play in Siphon. The lad's talk was not bluster. He had no fear of the local desperado and

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slave-driver. He had set himself to a task and the work must be done. Something also told Siphon it was a good work and for a meritorious purpose.

With dynamic suddenness something welled up within Siphon Jim. With a flood of knotty feeling, came over him a warm, intensified attraction for the cool, deliberate, adamantine character of this young stranger.

"Sonny," he said hoarsely after a time, "there's a wrong in this business somewhere that's got to be made right."

"There is," the other replied.

"Go over in my room there and have a good sleep. Carew eats at this solitary little table here against the north wall. I begin to understand."

"Thanks," said the stranger simply.

He picked up the hat and gun.

Siphon heard the door close and later the creak of his bunk.

"I know what it is," said Siphon.

Pete had not moved during the entire dialogue. Siphon arose, walked past him to the drawer in the chuck counter that stretched across the west side of the room where food was placed from the pantry in its preparation for the tables.

He pulled the drawer out its entire length. From the back part he took out a beautiful pearl-handled six-shooter, the costliest weapon in camp. He pulled out a little pasteboard box also and began sliding tiny pink cylinders of destruction from one to the other.

"I know what it is," he repeated. "He's the kind of youngster little Jamie would have been by now—if he'd lived!"

Pete, the cookee, hied him hence. At hence he told of the stranger in Siphon's lodgings. A dozen others immediately did likewise in as many directions. Like wildfire through the timber spread news of the coming encounter.

Then the men sobered when their initial excitement passed and they thought of consequences. The passing of Czar Carew would mean the closing of an era in the Wasatches. By sunset a strange and ominous silence penetrated the tracts.

AT HALF after seven Pete helped the grim-faced Siphon light the socket lamps. The little sickly jets of flame cast a weird light over the sixty men finishing their evening meal excitedly, half-heartedly, with nerves at high tension. Old Siphon's hand shook as he pulled the huge chimney down between the brass prongs of the burner on the great hanging-lamp in the center.

All sorts and conditions of men from every calling in life swilled in their hoggish suppers with furtive eyes watching one another's faces and the two doors on the south and the east ends of the room. Swarthy, capable lumberjacks from the timber lands of the north; deadly wiry little men from the arid lands to the south, hiding in the Wasatch timber from the long hand of the law that felt over the lowlands and civilized places but dared not mount up to those forests of the sky; city men working for their keep to kill memories of other days in a world which would perforce ever be to them dead—those shuffled together by an incongruous fate and thrown together like a hoard of half-beasts, controlled by the iron hand of the Blood Czar of the Utah Mountains, awaited in grim silence what the coming hour might develop.

And among them moved Siphon and the cookee, cursing openly at complaints and no eyes more furtively watching both doors than their own.

Here and there one of the jacks made semblance of levity but their jokes were of a post-mortem humor and rang hollow. Sixty pipes were going at eight o'clock and slowly upward in the long and stuffy room grew a fog-like smoke.

Shooting Carew had not appeared. This was bad. It portended that some one might have tipped off the great foreman to the mission of the stranger. It meant that Shooting Carew would not eat with one whom later he might slay. The thing had been enacted before. It was an idiosyncrasy of Carew's. It was very bad.

The men grew more restrained and unnatural.

The Easterner had not appeared. The door to Siphon's room on the eastern end of the room was closed. But the door to the south where Shooting Carew was momentarily expected to loom was growing wonderful with a stronger and clearer panorama of stars.

Those stars had already begun to prinkle in a wonderful mountain sky. Night animals cried in the deep vast places. The world-wide valleys became swathed in horizon-far laves of mist. To stand in the doorway and view the acreless reaches of

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ether was to stand at the top of the world and gaze on the bottomless vault of the universe obscured in an ocean of purple and black.

Within the room the fog of smoke grew thicker. The wall-lamps blinked through like signals in a mist. The chimney heat of the center lamp caught the gray-blue fog and rolled it upward like a flue, whence it eddied against the ceiling and out again to the corners.

And finally Siphon rapped on the stove. The act brought silence.

"Boys," said he, "I'm thinkin' there'll be a show in this room tonight. And before the curtain's rung up, I got a request. Don't get between Shootin' Carew and the pantry if there's complications. There's a chap in the inner room, boys, that somethin' tells me is up here to right a wrong. It ain't your business nor mine. It's between him and the Czar. We're neutral—or you are, to a certain point. Me, I've taken a sudden interest in this young feller, boys. He's all nerve and will finish his work—or be finished. I—I can't see him finished, boys. Somethin' says to me sudden as we was arguin' conversation this afternoon: 'He's the kind o' lad your Jamie would 'a' been, Si, if he'd lived.' Just a little request boys, for our mutual health. Keep out o' line with them and this door."

There came a terse silence when he finished speaking. In that silence sounded the dull thud of heavy footsteps crossing the clearing to the cabin.

CAREW was a gorilla of a man. In a swarthy countenance scintillated wicked eyes with yet more wicked circles beneath them. A murderous goatee twitched on his under lip. A hideous scar ripped up his brow to his hair. The whole was an evil countenance one might see peering in at a window.

On the threshold he paused. Thumbs caught in his sagging belt, his right near his ponderous gun, slowly he searched every face in the room.

Finding every face familiar, he entered.

He spoke to no one as he kicked his way to his lone table and beckoned for Siphon to bring his evening drink.

He swashed down two drinks and turned to the men with a scowl.

"Is this a wake?" he bellowed. "Why are you sittin' like dummies?"

Through the fog the eyes of the men shifted or lowered. A slightly stimulated buzz followed the reprimand, forced and unnatural.

The boss shoved up his soft hat. He drew back the sleeves of a fiery undershirt and slung his gun-belt around to the back. Still scowling at his men he felt for his bottle and poured out more whisky.

"This place ain't natural tonight!" he exclaimed. "Jim, what's the meanin' o' this? I heard some one say there's a stranger in camp. Where is he?"

The breath of life was showing visibly in Siphon Jim's throat. He set a tray of heavy dishes on the counter, went behind it, grasped firmly hold of its edges and steadied himself.

"There's a stranger in my room," he said hoarsely. "He's sleepin'. Came all the way from Provo a-horse—over Strawberry Mountain."

"Who's he after? Company man?"

"No."

"Who's he after?"

"His business," said Siphon, "is with you."

The whole room was rigid. Carew scowled still more perplexedly at the attitude of his men whom he held in check by fear and force. It was the look on the face of Pete, the cookee, that aroused him to action.

"Come here, you Pete!" he ordered.

Ashen-faced, the cookee sat down his dishes. He advanced trembling. Carew arose. Unconsciously the men shrank back.

Carew came round the corner of his table and clutched for the terrorized cookee.

Pete dodged, uttered a wail of terror and sprang for Siphon's room. He stumbled over one of the men and sprawled headlong against the door. His weight threw it open. Into the tiny sleeping apartment he crawled and with a curse Carew was after him.

But before he reached the threshold Pete's inarticulate appeals for protection aroused a strange commotion in Siphon's bunk.

As Carew, cursing, was about to enter and haul forth the frantic cookee, a tall form loomed before him.

The weird lamplight fell on a six-foot-two Apollo.

Carew backed off.

"Who in —— are you?" he roared.

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Sixty pipes stopped puffing.

The camps had contained statuary of manhood aplenty. But the Wasatch Mountains never held in their wooded heart such a specimen of magnificent physique as stood suddenly in the inky-black doorway with the cowering, whimpering Pete behind him.

For an instant thus, the stranger paused in tableau. Lamplight glinted on high golden curls. Eyes the color of molten lead glanced round at the sea of faces, surprised at so many. One hand held the latch of the door. The other was slung by a thumb in his belt. His Norfolk was wrinkled where he had slept in his clothing, and the wrinkles about the steady eyes were those of one not fully awakened from slumber.

"My name," announced the stranger, "doesn't matter."

"It matters when I ask it."

"No, it doesn't. Not in the least. Come out, young fellow," he said to the cookee. Then to Carew, "I take it you're the party I'm up here to interview."

In an ocean of silence he left the door and advanced down the room, Carew backing ominously before him.

Sixty pairs of eyes gazed on the scene in glassy fascination. Knowing Carew, it was courage de luxe, a canvas for Remington.

Perhaps Carew felt the spell of that iron nerve and diamond courage. His wicked eyes were riveted on those orbs of dreadnought gray but the blood beneath his swarthy bronze began to fan slowly from his features.

Carew backed to his table and, holding the gaze, he sat down on a corner. The stranger leaned against the main table, thrust his hands in his trousers pockets and looked the lumber camp Czar over carefully. Like a phantom, Pete crept across to Siphon.

Bristle-headed and grizzled old Siphon, white beneath his bronzed and wrinkled flesh, stood in the same position behind the chuck counter.

But his skinny hand had felt on the shelf behind and now over the top was coming the muzzle of a gun. It was a beautiful gun. The flame of an oil lamp at one side caught and gleamed along the ebony barrel. But the pearl of the exquisite handle was hidden in the skeleton hand of the old cook and a cordy finger was moving forward into the trigger ring.

Silence!

Somewhere beneath the floor came the chirrup of an insect. A huge blue-bottle bumbled against the ceiling in the heated stuffy room.

"What might this business be you're favorin' me with?" asked the queer voice of the Wasatch king.

The stranger's right hand left the side pocket. He reached into his breast and drawing forth an object he pointed it at the boss.

"I understand," said he, "it's against the etiquette of this vicinity to inquire into the history of its inhabitants. I've got to be impolite. So in fear that some one—especially yourself—might start complications, it's my painful duty to explain to you that you're fully covered with a gun. I've got to go further than this and ask a personal question: Brammel, did you get that scar on your forehead in Hunting, Massachusetts?"

At the word "scar" the Czar's upper lip snapped back. Vermilion flooded over his countenance. He lurched with a curse. Came an explosion at the bar.

Then pandemonium!

Out of it reared the magnificent proportions of the golden-haired Apollo. One ear was torn from his head. Blood trickled down on his unshaved face. His clothes were in ribbons.

"Keep away!" he roared at the cursing crowd. "You got grievances long standing. But this ain't the time for their settling."

He cleared a great circle in the humanity about him whose revenge of months was unleashed when the boss went down.

"I'm playing this hand," cried the stranger, "and I play it alone."

Right and left he hurled the men. Then he yanked at his hip and held them at bay with his ugly real gun. On the floor at his feet lay the Czar, making no move at retaliation.

"Curse you!" cried the young man at Siphon. "Why did you do it?"

"To save you, you fool. He reached for his gun. And look what you drew—that little thing with which you had him covered!"

"Ye gods!" came a whisper from the quieted men. "It's a kid's toy gun."

Down on his knees Carew had slid, with a shot in his vitals. The flush had fanned

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out of his face, leaving it pasty and yellow. With distended eyeballs the bad man of the Wasatches stared in agony at the stick the stranger had held.

Whispering "Brammel, Brammel," he rolled on his back on the floor.

Then, enduring the torturing pain in his side, he reached for the little weapon.

Carew turned it over and over, a bit of stick with a hole through the center. Elastic cord was fastened with a tack on an end. And to the elastic was tied ammunition of cork.

Under his head and shoulders the stranger thrust a strong supporting arm.

"Where did you get it?" Carew whispered hoarsely.

The stranger smiled.

"You recognize it? You gave it to me, twenty years ago."

An agonized cry sounded from the shanty far out into the mountain night.

"Davie!" said Carew.

"Father!" replied David.

FATHER!

Siphon Jim backed away, clutched the counter, knocked dishes to the floor with clattering smash.

"I've shot," he gasped, "your father?"

"You threw in a card that wasn't in the deck. But you did it kindly, and that's something. Lay back father. Somebody get a doctor."

Over and over Carew was turning the poor little pop-gun, yellow and mottled with age.

"Remember it, father?" asked the stranger. "Twenty years ago, it happened. Almost twenty years ago tonight."

Carew let his eyes slur from the weapon off into space and with suffering pupils they penetrated a veil behind which are stored all the years in the coffers of Time.

"You thought you'd killed me, father. But you hadn't. I promised mother I'd search the whole world till I found you. It was last week I heard of you, up in these mountains of Utah. I knew the man it had made you. If it were you I staked my whole life you wouldn't draw—if you saw the weapon I carried."

"Davie!" said the man brokenly. "I never killed you at all?"

The boy did not answer. Grimly he took the liquor that the speechless and humble Siphon offered and Carew drank it pitifully. The Blood Boss of the Wasatches had aged in three minutes.

One of the men was a doctor. With a butcher-knife he slashed open Carew's clothes and bared the white flesh. Close to the Czar's hip was an ugly carbuncle of purple. From it the blood oozed stickily.

Old Siphon Jim was suffering too.

"What's it about?" he pleaded.

David passed his hand over his eyes as if to shut out the sight of that wound. He gulped down some liquor.

"I was a little kid when it happened," said he. "We lived in Massachusetts." He shut his lips tightly as if the narration hurt him to tell. The corpse-like face of Carew was hanging on his words. "Our names were Brammel. There was him and mother and sister and me in the family."

"Your sister," whispered Carew. "Where is Jennie?"

The young man did not reply. He hastened on:

"Mother and father often quarreled. Father had a temper, I guess you boys know. One night I was going round the house with this little gun and I popped it at him, just a little kid's deviltry. Father tore it from my hands. That bruised my hands and I blubbered." The young man hastened through the recital as if repeating a distasteful lesson. "Mother took my part. Father's temper got loose and he struck her. She caught up the toy and struck him back in return. There's a sharp tack in the end. It laid his forehead open, from the eyebrow to the hair."

Carew gazed in a trance-glint before him. Suddenly his lips moved.

"Them blotches on there—blood from my forehead—twenty years ago tonight!"

"Father wrested the gun from her and struck at her in his temper again. The blow missed her. It felled me. I lay very still."

"Yes," whispered Carew hoarsely, "I always thought I'd killed him. I ran out. I got away. They never caught me. And always through the years I've seen that little dead kid before me. I guess I been a cuss, boys, because o' some memories. We all got 'em. Memories!"

"Father," said the boy, "I've come to take you back to mother. Jennie's dead! Mother's all alone. She's needin' you in the little New England village with the grandmother's garden round the door. Holly-

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hocks and peonies! Sunflowers and saucy asters! Robins in the ragged lilac hedges and the smell o' New England rain drippin' on the south-board wall by the ramblers. I've hunted for you from the iron foundries of Pennsylvania through the Kansas wheat-fields to the ghosts of dead villages out in the sagebrush. I guess the hunt's done. If your wound isn't bad I've got an extra horse I've always had me on purpose. There's going to be some reunion in that New England village back home."

"Jennie's dead?" whispered Carew.

"She died a long time ago. And mother's all alone. She's willing to forgive and forget. She wants to see you again and I swore if you were alive I'd find you."

Half an hour later the rough camp doctor came from Siphon's room where the man lay in coma.

"He'll live," said he.

A low, growling murmur began to grow in the room among the hostile faces who could not forget years of brutality.

Siphon, more bristle-headed and grizzled than ever, faced them from the doorway.

"Boys," said he, "we've all got grudges—same as we've all got memories. Let's call it I fired one shot for the bunch—and wipe the record clean!"

A MONTH later Siphon again sat dreaming in the sun.

"The kind of lad Jamie would have been," said he, "if he'd lived."

The camp was in somewhat of disorder waiting for a new slave-driver. From a far-off knot of men the camp doctor emerged bearing a letter which had come in the newly arrived monthly mail. Little Pete was with him.

"It's funny, Si," said he, as the two sat down, "how you can bury a corpse but you can't bury a memory. There's men in these mountains whose crimes was outlawed years ago. Yet they won't go back. Why? Because they can't face the memories. That was the case o' Carew. He never could bury the memory and it made him a brute.

"Well," went on the doctor, "I bet there's more than one man in these camps who'd like to see their wives and children again beside Carew. Only he was the lucky one—the folks at home forgave and will forget sommat. As for the rest of us—aw ——!"

Siphon looked quickly at the face of the brawny camp doctor.

Siphon saw another story was there, but this was not the place for its telling.

"Did Davie get home with his father?" he asked.

The doctor glanced morosely through the letter in his hand.

"Yes," said he, "that's why I come over to see you. It completes the story the boy told me privately in the nights when we was pullin' Carew through. The lonely old mother tried to hunt for her lost man, same as lots of our women-folks up here would like to see their wayward men-folks come back to 'em. But she didn't have the knowledge o' the world nor the money——"

Siphon shut his lips tightly.

"No," said he with vitriolic sarcasm, "money's better employed financing no-account kids round Europe in little velvet pants!"

The doctor ignored the interruption.

"So the boy, without pay, without anything but seein' one poor old woman happy, starts on the Holy Grail for Carew. He done it because he's that kind o' man. And he says here he had his reward when he took Carew in, and after hours o' sob-stuff the man and the woman went out to the years-old grave together."

"Grave!" ejaculated Siphon, "What grave?"

"Carew's son's grave, where his son had been twenty years buried. You see, that wasn't Carew's boy at all. Carew's girl drowned herself for him after he'd led her wrong. He was a rich young feller who was white enough to go on that search for the mother as fittin' retribution."

"Yes," said Siphon, as again the evening stars were filling a turquoise canopy of mountain night, "he was the kind o' lad little Jamie would have been, if little Jamie had lived!"

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FINISHED

A five-part story—Conclusion

by

H·RIDER HAGGARD

CHAPTER XX

HEDA'S TALE

THAT evening when I was lying on my bed outside the cave, I heard the tale of Anscombe and Heda. Up to a certain point he told it, then she went on with the story.

"On the morning after our arrival at this place, Allan," said Anscombe, "I woke up to find you gone from the hut. As you did not come back I concluded that you were with Zikali, and walked about looking for you. Then food was brought to us and Heda and I breakfasted together, after which we went to where we heard the horses neighing and found that yours was gone. Returning, much frightened, we met Nombé, who gave me your note which explained everything, and we inquired of her why this had been done and what was to become of us. She smiled and answered that we had better ask the first question of the king and the second of her master Zikali, and in the meanwhile be at peace since we were quite safe.

"I tried to see Zikali but could not. Then I went to inspan the horses with the idea of following you, only to find that they were gone. Indeed I have not seen them from that day to this. Next we thought of starting on foot, for we were quite desperate. But Nombé intervened and told us that if we ventured out of the kloof we should be killed. In short we were prisoners.

"This went on for some days, during which we were well treated but could not succeed in seeing Zikali. At length one morning he sent for us and we were taken to the enclosure in front of his hut, Kaatje coming with us as interpreter. For a while he sat still, looking very grim and terrible. Then he said:

" 'White Chief and Lady, you think ill of me because Macumazahn has gone and you are kept prisoners here, and before all is done you will think worse. Yet I counsel you to trust me since everything that happens is for your good.'

"At this point Heda, who, as you know, talked Zulu fairly well, though not so well as she does now, broke in, and said some very angry things to him."

"Yes," interrupted Heda. "I told him that he was a liar and I believed that he had murdered you and meant to murder us."

"He listened stonily," continued Anscombe, "and answered, 'I perceive, Lady Heddana, that you understand enough of our tongue to enable me to talk to you; therefore I will send away this half-breed woman, since what I have to say is secret.'

"Then he called servants by clapping his hands and ordered them to remove Kaatje, which was done.

" 'Now, Lady Heddana,' he said, speaking very slowly so that Heda might interpret to me and repeating his words whenever she did not understand, 'I have a proposal to make to you. For my own ends it is necessary that you should play a part

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and appear before the king and the Council as the goddess of this land who is called the Chieftainess of Heaven, which goddess is always seen as a white woman. Therefore you must travel with me to Ulundi and there do those things which I shall tell you.'

" 'And if I refuse to play this trick,' said Heda, 'what then?'

" 'Then, Lady Heddana, this white lord whom you love and who is to be your husband will—die—and after he is dead you must still do what I desire of you, or—die also.'

" 'Would he come with me to Ulundi?' asked Heda.

" 'Not so, Lady. He would stay here under guard, but quite safe, and you will be brought back to him, safe. Choose now, with death on the one hand and safety on the other. I would sleep a little. Talk the matter over in your own tongue and when it is settled awaken me again," and he shut his eyes and appeared to go to sleep.

"So we discussed the situation, if you can call it discussion when we were both nearly mad. Heda wished to go. I begged her to let me be killed rather than trust herself into the hands of this old villain. She pointed out that even if I were killed, which she admitted might not happen, she would still be in his hands whence she could only escape by her own death, whereas if she went there was a chance that we might both continue to live, and that after all death was easy to find. So in the end I gave way and we woke up Zikali and told him so.

"He seemed pleased and spoke to us gently, saying, 'I was sure that wisdom dwelt behind those bright eyes of yours, lady, and again I promise you that neither you nor the lord your lover shall come to any harm. Also that in payment I and my child, Nombé, will protect you even with our lives, and further, that I will bring back your friend, Macumazahn, to you, though not yet. Now go and be happy together. Nombé will tell the Lady Heddana when she is to start. Of all this say nothing on your peril to the woman Kaatje, since if you do, it will be necessary that she should be made silent. Indeed, lest she should learn something, tomorrow I shall send her on to await you at Ulundi, therefore be not surprised if you see her go, and take no heed of aught she may say in going. Nombé, my child, will fill her place as servant to the Lady Heddana, and sleep with her at night that she may not be lonely or afraid.'

"Then he clapped his hands again and servants came and conducted us back to the huts. And now, Allan, Heda will go on with the story."

"Well, Mr. Quatermain," she said, "nothing more happened that day which we spent with bursting hearts. Kaatje did not question us as to what the witch-doctor had said after she was sent away. Indeed I noticed that she was growing very stupid and drowsy, like a person who has been drugged, as I daresay she was, and would insist upon beginning to pack up the things in a foolish kind of way, muttering something about our trekking on the following day.

"The night passed as usual, Kaatje sleeping very heavily by my side and snoring so much" (here I groaned sympathetically) "that I could get little rest. On the next morning after breakfast as the huts were very hot, Nombé suggested that we should sit under the shadow of the overhanging rock, just where we are now. Accordingly we went, and being tired out with all our troubles and bad nights, I fell into a doze, and so, I think, did Maurice, Nombé sitting near to us and singing all the while a very queer kind of song.

"Presently, through my doze as it were, I saw Kaatje approaching. Nombé went to meet her, still singing, and, taking her hand, led her to the cart where they seemed to talk to the horses, which surprised me as there were no horses. Then she brought her round the cart and pointed to us, still singing.

"Now Kaatje began to weep and throw her hands about, while Nombé patted her on the shoulder. I tried to speak to her but could not. My tongue was tied, why I don't know, but I suppose because I was really asleep, and Maurice also was asleep and did not wake at all."

"Yes," said Anscombe, "I remember nothing of all this business."

"After a while Kaatje went away, still weeping, and then I fell asleep in earnest and did not wake until the sun was going down, when I roused Maurice and we both went back to the hut, where I found that Nombé had cooked our evening meal. I looked for Kaatje, but could not find her. Also in searching through my things I

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missed the bag of jewels. I called to Nombé and asked where Kaatje was, whereon she smiled and said that she had gone away, taking the bag with her. This pained me, for I had always found Kaatje quite honest——"

"Which she is," I remarked, "for those jewels are now in a bank at Maritzburg."

Heda nodded and went on:

"I am glad to hear it; indeed, remembering what Zikali had said, I never really suspected her of being a thief, but thought it was all part of some plan. After this things went on as before, except that Nombé took Kaatje's place and was with me day and night. Of Kaatje's disappearance she would say nothing. Zikali we did not see.

"On the third evening after the vanishing of Kaatje, Nombé came and said that I must make ready for a journey, and while she spoke men arrived with a litter that had grass mats hung round it. Nombé brought out my long cape and put it over me, also a kind of veil of white stuff which she threw over my head, so as to hide my face. I think it was made out of one of our traveling mosquito nets. Then she said I must say good-by to Maurice for a while. There was a scene as you may imagine. He grew angry and said that he would come with me, whereon armed men appeared, six of them, and pushed him away with the handles of their spears.

"In another minute I was lifted into the litter which Nombé entered with me, and so we were parted, wondering if we should ever see each other more. At the mouth of the kloof I saw another litter surrounded by a number of Zulus, which Nombé said contained Zikali.

"We traveled all that night and two succeeding nights, resting during the day in deserted kraals that appeared to have been made ready for us. It was a strange journey, for, although the armed men flitted about us, neither they nor the bearers ever spoke, nor did I see Zikali, or indeed any one else. Only Nombé comforted me from time to time, telling me there was nothing to fear. Toward dawn on the third night we traveled over some hills and I was put into a new hut and told that my journey was done as we had reached a place near Ulundi.

"I slept most of the following day, but, after I had eaten toward evening, Zikali crept into the hut, just as a great toad might do, and squatted down in front of me.

"'Lady,' he said, 'listen. Tonight, perhaps one hour after sundown, perhaps two, perhaps three, Nombé will lead you, dressed in a certain fashion, from this hut. See now, outside of it there is a tongue of rock up which you may climb, unnoted, by the little path that runs between those big stones. Look,' and he showed me the place through the door-hole. 'The path ends on a flat boulder at the end of the rock. There you will take you stand, holding in your right hand a little assegai which will be given to you. Nombé will not accompany you to the rock, but she will crouch between the stones at the head of the path and perhaps from time to time whisper to you what to do. Thus when she tells you, you must throw the little spear into the air, so that it falls among a number of men gathered in debate who will be seated about twenty paces from the rock. For the rest you are to stand quite still, saying nothing and showing no alarm whatever you may hear or see. Among the men before you may be your friend, Macumazahn, but you must not appear to recognize him, and if he speaks to you, you must make no answer. Even if he should seem to shoot at you, do not be afraid. Do you understand? If so, repeat what I have told you.'

"I obeyed him and asked what would happen if I did not do these things, or some of them.

"He answered, 'You will be killed, Nombé will be killed, the lord Mauriti your lover will be killed, and your friend Macumazahn will be killed. Perhaps even I shall be killed and we will talk the matter over in the land of ghosts.'

"On hearing this I said I would do my best to carry out his orders, and, after making me repeat them once more, he went away. Later, Nombé dressed me up as you saw me, Mr. Quatermain, put some glittering powder into my hair and touched me beneath the eyes with a dark kind of pigment. Also she gave me the little spear and made me practise standing quite still with it raised in my right hand, telling me that when I heard her say the word 'Throw,' I was to cast it into the air. Then the moon rose and we heard men talking at a distance. At last some one came to the hut and whispered to Nombé, who led me out to the little path between the rocks.

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"This must have been nearly two hours after I heard the men begin to talk——"

"Excuse me," I interrupted, "but where was Nombé all those two hours?"

"With me. She never left my side, Mr. Quatermain, and while I was on the rock she was crouched within three paces of me between two big stones at the mouth of the pass."

"Indeed," I replied faintly, "this is very interesting. Please continue—but one word how was she dressed? Did she wear a necklace of blue beads?"

"Just as she always is, or rather less so, for she had nothing on except her moocha, and certainly no blue beads. But why do you ask?"

"From curiosity merely. I mean, I will tell you afterward. Pray go on."

"WELL, I stepped forward on to the rock and at first saw nothing, because at that moment the moon was hid by a cloud; indeed Nombé had waited for the cloud to pass over its face, before she thrust me forward. Also some smoke from a fire below was rising straight in front of me.

"Presently the cloud passed and the smoke thinned and I saw the circle of those savage men seated beneath, and in their center a great chief wearing a leopard's skin cloak who I guessed was the king. You I did not see, Mr. Quatermain, because you were behind a tree, yet I felt that you were there, a friend among all those foes. I stood still, as I had been taught to do, and heard the murmur of astonishment and caught the gleam of the moonlight from the white feathers that were sewn upon my robe.

"Then I heard also the voice of Zikali speaking from beneath. He called on you to come out to shoot at me, and the man whom I took to be the king ordered you to obey. You appeared from behind the tree, and I was certain from the look upon your face that at that distance you did not know who I was in my strange and glittering raiment.

"You lifted the pistol and I was terribly afraid, for I had seen you shoot with it before on the veranda of the Temple, and knew well that you do not miss. Very nearly I screamed out to you, but remembered and was silent, thinking that after all it did not much matter if I died, except for the sake of Maurice here. Also by now I guessed that I was being used to deceive those men before me into some terrible act, and that if I died, at least they would be undeceived.

"I thought that an age passed between the time that you pointed the pistol and I saw the flash for which I was waiting."

"You need not have waited, Heda," I interposed, "for if I had really aimed at you you would never have seen that flash, at least so it is said. I too guessed enough to shoot above you, although at the time I did not know that it was you on the rock; indeed I thought it was Nombé, painted up."

"Yes, I heard the bullet sing over me. Then I heard the voice of Zikali challenging you to shoot him, and, to tell the truth, hoped that you would do so. Just before you fired for the second time, Nombé whispered to me—'Throw' and I threw the little red-handled spear into the air. Then as the pistol went off Nombé whispered—'Come.' I slipped away down the path and back with her into the hut, where she kissed me and said that I had done well indeed, after which she took off my strange robe and helped me to put on my own dress.

"That is all I know, except that some hours later I was awakened from sleep and put into the litter where I went to sleep again, for what I had gone through tired me very much. I need not trouble you with the rest, for we journeyed here in the same way that we had journeyed to Ulundi—by night. I did not see Zikali, but in answer to my questions, Nombé told me that the Zulus had declared war against the English. What part in the business I had played, she would not tell me, and I do not know to this hour, but I am sure that it was a great one.

"So we came back to the Black Kloof, where I found Maurice quite well, and now he had better go on with the tale, for if I begin to tell you of our meeting I shall become foolish."

"There isn't much more to tell," said Anscombe, "except about yourself. While Heda was away I was kept a prisoner and watched day and night by Zikali's people who would not let me stir a yard, but otherwise treated me kindly. Then one day at sunrise, or shortly after it, Heda reappeared and told me all this story, for the end of

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which, as you may imagine, I thanked God.

"After that we just lived on here, happily enough since we were together, until one day Nombé told us that there had been a great battle in which the Zulus had wiped out the English, killing hundreds and hundreds of them, although for every soldier that they killed, they had lost two. Of course this made us very sad, especially as we were afraid you might be with our troops.

"We asked Nombé if you were present at the battle. She answered that she would inquire of her spirit and went through some very strange performances with ashes and knuckle bones, after which she announced that you had been in the battle but were alive and coming this way with a dog that had silver on it. We laughed at her, saying that she could not possibly know anything of the sort, also that dogs as a rule did not carry silver. Whereon she only smiled and said—'Wait.'

"I think it was three days later that one night toward dawn I was awakened by hearing a dog barking outside my hut, as though it wished to call attention to its presence. It barked so persistently and in a way so unlike a Kaffir dog that at length about dawn I went out of the hut to see what was the matter.

"There, standing a few yards away, surrounded by some of Zikali's people, I saw Lost and knew at once that it was an English Airedale, for I have had several of the breed. It looked very tired and frightened, and while I was wondering whence on earth it could have come, I noticed that it had a silver-mounted collar and remembered Nombé and her talk about you and a dog that carried silver on it. From that moment, Allan, I was certain that you were somewhere near, especially as the beast ran up to me—it would take no notice of the Kaffirs—and kept looking toward the mouth of the kloof, as though it wished me to follow it. Just then Nombé arrived, and on seeing the dog looked at me oddly.

" 'I have a message for you from my master, Mauriti,' she said to me through Heda, who by now had arrived upon the scene, having also been aroused by Lost's barking. 'It is that if you wish to take a walk with a strange dog, you can do so, and bring back anything you may find.' "

"The end of it was that after we had fed Lost with some milk and meat, I and six of Zikali's men started down the kloof, Lost going ahead of us and now and again running back and whining. At the mouth of the kloof it led us over a hill and down into a bush-veld valley where the thorns grew very thick. When we had gone along the valley for about two miles, one of the Kaffirs saw a Basuto pony still saddled, and caught it. The dog went on past the pony to a tree that had been shattered by lightning, and there within a few yards of the tree we found you lying senseless, Allan, or, as I thought at first, dead, and by your side a Martini rifle of which the stock also seemed to have been broken by lightning.

"Well, we put you on a shield and carried you back here, meeting no one, and that is all the story, Allan."

He stopped and we stared at each other. Then I called Lost and patted its head, and the dear beast licked my hand as if it understood that it was being thanked.

"A strange tale," I said, "but God Almighty has put much wisdom into His creatures of which we know nothing. Let us thank Him," and in our hearts we did.

Thus was I rescued from death by the intelligence and fidelity of a four-footed creature. Doubtless in my semi-conscious state that resulted from shock, weariness and sun-stroke, I had all the while headed sub-consciously and without any definite object for the Black Kloof. When I was within a few miles of it I was stunned by the lightning which ran down the rifle to the ground, though not actually struck. Then the dog, which had escaped, played its part, wandering about the country to find kelp for me, and so I was saved.

NOW of the long months that followed I have little to tell. They were not unhappy in their way, for week by week I felt myself growing stronger, though very slowly.

There was a path, steep, difficult and secret, which could be gained through one of the caves in the precipice, not that in which I slept. This path ran up a water-cut kloof through a patch of thorns to a flat table-land that was part of the Ceza stronghold. By it, when I had gained sufficient strength, we used to climb to the plateau, and there take exercise. It was an agreeable change from the stifling atmosphere of the Black Kloof.

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The days were very dull, for we were as much out of the world as if we had been marooned on a desert island. Still from time to time we heard of the progress of the war through Nombé, for Zikali I saw but seldom.

She told of disasters to the English, of the death of a great young Chief who was deserted by his companions and died fighting bravely—afterward I discovered that this was the Prince Imperial of France—of the advance of our armies, of defeats inflicted upon Cetewayo's *impis*, and finally of the destruction of the Zulus on the battlefield of Ulundi, where they hurled themselves by thousands upon the British square, to be swept away by case-shot and the hail of bullets. This battle, by the way, the Zulus call, not Ulundi or Nodwengu, for it was fought in front of Panda's old kraal of that name, but Ocwecweni, which means—"the fight of the sheet-iron fortress."

I suppose they give it this name because the hedge of bayonets, flashing in the sunlight, reminded them of sheet-iron. Or it may be because these proved as impenetrable as would have done walls of iron. At any rate they dashed their naked bodies against the storm of lead and fell in heaps, only about a dozen of our men being killed, as the little graveyard in the center of the square entrenchment, about which still lie the empty cartridge cases, records today.

There, then, on that plain perished the Zulu kingdom which was built up by Chaka.

Now it was after this event that I saw Zikali and begged him to let us go. I found him triumphant and yet strangely disturbed and, as I thought, more apprehensive than I had ever seen him.

"So, Zikali," I said, "if what I hear is true, you have had your way and destroyed the Zulu people. Now you should be happy."

"Is man ever happy, Macumazahn, when he has gained that which he sought for years? The two out there sigh and are sad because they can not be married after their own fashion, though what there is to keep them apart I do not know. Well, in time they will be married, only to find that they are not so happy as they thought they would be. Oh! a day will come when they will talk to each other and say—'Those moons which we spent waiting together in the Black Kloof were the true moons of sweetness, for then we had something to gain; now we have gained all—and what is it?'

"So it is with me, Macumazahn. Since the Zulus under Chaka killed out my people, the Ndwandwe, year by year I have plotted and waited to see them wedded to the assegai. Now it has come about. You white men have stamped them flat upon the plain of Ulundi; they are no more a nation. And yet I am not happy, for after all it was the House of Senzangacona and not the Zulus that harmed me and mine, and Cetewayo still lives.

"While the queen bee remains there may be a hive again. While an ember still glows in the dead ashes, the forest may yet be fired. Perhaps when Cetewayo is dead, then I shall be happy. Only his death and mine are set by Fate as close together as two sister grains of corn upon the cob."

I turned the subject, again asking his leave to depart to Natal or to join the English army.

"You can not go yet," he answered sternly, "so trouble me no more. The land is full of wandering bands of Zulus who would kill you and your blood would be on my head. Moreover, if they saw a white woman who had sheltered with me, might they not guess something? To dress a doll for the part of the Inkosazana-y-Zulu is the greatest crime in the world, Macumazahn, and what would happen to the Opener of Roads and all his House if it were even breathed that he had dressed that doll and thus brought about the war which ruined them? When Cetewayo is killed and the dead are buried and peace falls upon the land, the peace of death, then you shall go, Macumazahn, and not before."

"At least, Zikali, send a message to the captains of the English army and tell them that we are here."

"Send a message to the hyenas and tell them where the carcass is; send a message to the hunters and tell them where the buck Zikali crouches on its form! Hearken, Macumazahn, if you do this, or even urge me to do it, neither you nor your friends shall ever leave the Black Kloof. I have spoken."

Then, understanding that the case was hopeless, I left him and he glowered after me, for fear had made him cruel. He had won the long game and success had turned to ashes in his mouth. Or rather, he had not

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won, yet, since his war was against the House of Senzangacona from which he and his tribe had suffered cruel wrong. To pull it down he must pull down the Zulu nation; it was like burning a city to destroy a compromising letter. He had burnt the city, but the letter still remained intact and might be produced in evidence against him.

In other words Cetewayo yet lived. Therefore his vengeance remained quite unslaked and his danger was as great, or perhaps greater than it had ever been before. For was he not the prophet who by producing the Princess of Heaven, the traditional goddess of the Zulus, before the eyes of the king and council, had caused them to decide for war? And supposing it were so much as breathed that this spirit, which they seemed to see, had been but a trick and a fraud, what then? He would be tortured to death if his dupes had time, or torn limb from limb if they had not, that is if he could die like other men—a matter as to which I personally had no doubt.

Shortly after I left Zikali, Heda and I ate our evening meal together. Anscombe, as it chanced, had gone by the secret path to the table-land of which I have spoken, where he amused himself, as of course we were not allowed to fire a gun, by catching partridges, with the help of an ingenious system of grass nets which he had invented.

There were springs on this table-land that formed little pools of water, at which the partridges, also occasionally guinea-fowl and bush pheasants came to drink at sunrise and sunset. Here it was that he set his nets and retired to work them at those hours by means of strings that he pulled from hiding-places. So Heda and I were alone.

I told her of my ill success with Zikali, at which she was much disappointed. Then by an afterthought I suggested that she might try to do something in the way of getting a message through to the English camp at Ulundi, or elsewhere, by help of the witch-doctoress, Nombé, adding that I would speak to her myself had I not observed that I seemed to be out of favor with her of late. Heda shook her head and answered that she thought it would be useless to try,—also too dangerous. Remembering Zikali's threats, on reflection I agreed with her.

"Tell me, Mr. Quatermain," she added, "is it possible for one woman to be in love with another?"

I stared at her and replied that I did not understand what she meant, since women, so far as I had observed them, were generally in love either with a man or with themselves, perhaps more often with the latter than the former, which was rather a cheap joke with just enough truth in to make it acceptable—in the Black Kloof.

"So I thought," she answered, "but really Nombé goes on in a most peculiar way. As you know she took a great fancy to me from the beginning, perhaps because she had never had any other woman with whom to associate, having, so far as I can make out, been brought up here among men from a child. Indeed, her story is that she was one of twins and therefore as the younger was exposed to die according to the Zulu superstition. Zikali, however, or a servant of his who knew what was happening, rescued and reared her, so practically I am the only female with whom she has ever been intimate.

"At any rate her affection for me has grown and grown until, although it seems ungrateful to say so, it has become something of a nuisance. She has told me again and again that she would die to protect me, and that if by chance anything happened to me, she would kill herself and follow me into another world. She is continually making divinations about my future, and as these, in which she entirely believes, always show me as living without her, she is much distressed and at times bursts into tears."

"Hysteria! It is very common among the Zulu women, and especially those of them who practise magic arts," I answered.

"Perhaps, but as it results in the most intense jealousy, Nombé's hysteria is awkward. For instance, she is horribly jealous of Maurice."

"The instincts of a chaperon developed early," I suggested again.

"That won't quite do, Mr. Quatermain," answered Heda with a laugh, "since she is even more jealous of you. With reference to Maurice, she explains frankly that if we marry she might, as she puts it, 'continue to sit outside the hut,' but that in your case you live 'in my head,' where she can not come between you and me."

"Mad," I remarked, "quite mad. Still madness has to be dealt with in this world like other things, and Nombé, being an

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abnormal person, may suffer from abnormal ideas. It just amounts to this: she has conceived a passionate devotion to you, at which I am sure neither Maurice nor I can wonder."

"Are those the kind of compliments you used to pay in your youth, Mr. Quatermain? I expect so, and now that you are old you can not stop them. Well, I thank you all the same, because perhaps you mean what you say. But what is to be done about Nombé? Hush! Here she comes. I will leave you to reason with her, if you get the chance," and she departed in a hurry.

Nombé arrived, and something in her aspect told me that I was going to get the chance. Her eternal smile was almost gone and her dark, beautiful eyes flashed ominously. Still she began by asking in a mild voice whether the lady Heddana had eaten her supper with appetite. It will be observed that she was not interested in *my* appetite or whether enough was left for Anscombe when he returned. I replied that so far as I noted she had consumed about half a partridge, with other things.

"I am glad," said Nombé, "since I was not here to attend upon her, having been summoned to speak with the Master."

Then she sat down and looked at me like a thunderstorm.

"I nursed you when you were so ill, Macumazahn," she began, "but now I learn that for the milk with which I fed you, you would force me to drink bitter water that will poison me."

I replied I was well aware that without her nursing I should long ago have been dead, which was what caused me to love her like my own daughter. But would she kindly explain? This she did at once.

"You have been plotting to take away from me the lady Heddana who to me is as mother and sister and child. It is useless to lie to me, for the Master has told me all; moreover, I knew it for myself, both through my spirit and because I had watched you."

"I have no intention of lying to you, Nombé, about this or any other matter, though I think that sometimes in the past you have lied to me. Tell me, do you expect the Inkosi Mauriti, the lady Heddana and myself to pass the rest of our lives in the Black Kloof, when they wish to get married and go across the Black Water to where their home may be, and I wish to attend to my affairs?"

"I do not know what I expect, Macumazahn, but I do know that never while I live will I be parted from the lady Heddana. At last I have found some one to love, and you and the other would steal her away from me."

I studied her for a while, then asked—

"Why do you not marry, Nombé, and have a husband and children to love?"

"Marry?" she replied. "I am married to my spirit which does not dwell beneath the sun, and my children are not of earth; moreover, all men are hateful to me," and her eyes added, "especially you."

"That is a calf with a dog's head," I replied in the words of the native proverb, meaning that she said what was not natural.

"Well, Nombé, if you are so fond of the lady Heddana, you had better arrange with her and the Inkosi Mauriti to go away with them."

"You know well I can not, Macumazahn. I am tied to my Master by ropes that are stronger than iron, and if I attempted to break them my spirit would wither and I should wither with it."

"Dear me! What a dreadful business. That is what comes of taking to magic. Well, Nombé, I am afraid I have nothing to suggest, nor, to tell you the truth, can I see what I have to do with the matter."

Then she sprang up in a rage, saying:

"I understand that not only will you give me no help, but that you also mock at me, Macumazahn. Moreover, as it is with you, so it is with Mauriti, who pretends to love my lady so much, though I love her more with my little finger than he does with all his body and what he calls his soul. Yes, he too mocks at me. Now if you were both dead," she added with sudden venom, "my lady would not wish to go away. Be careful lest a spell should fall upon you, Macumazahn," and without more words she turned and went.

At first I was inclined to laugh; the whole thing seemed so absurd. On reflection, however, I perceived that in reality it was very serious to people situated as we were. This woman was a savage; more, a mystic savage of considerable powers of mind—a formidable combination.

Also there were no restraints upon her, since public opinion had as little authority in the Black Kloof as the queen's writ.

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Lastly, it was not unknown for women to conceive these violent affections which, if thwarted, filled them with something like madness. Thus I remembered a very terrible occurrence of my youth which resulted in the death of one who was most dear to me. I will not dwell on it, but this, too, was the work of a passionate creature, woman I can scarcely call her, who thought she was being robbed of one whom she adored.

The end of it was that I did not enjoy my pipe that night, though luckily Anscombe returned after a successful evening's netting, about which he was so full of talk that there was no need for me to say much. So I put off any discussion of the problem until the morrow.

CHAPTER XXI

THE KING VISITS ZIKALI

NEXT morning, as a result of my cogitations, I went to see Zikali. After a good deal of trouble and delay, for, although his retinue was limited and, with the exception of Nombé, entirely male, this old prophet kept a kind of semi-state and was about as difficult to approach as a European monarch, I was admitted, to find him crouching over a fire in his hut, since at this season of the year even in that hot place the air was chilly until midday.

"What is it, Macumazahn?" he asked. "As to your going away, have patience. I learn that he who was King of the Zulus is in full flight, with the white men tracking him like a buck. When the buck is caught and killed, then you can go."

"It is about Nombé," I answered, and told him all the story, which did not seem to surprise him at all.

"Now see, Macumazahn," he said, taking some snuff, "how hard it is to dam up the stream of nature. This child, Nombé, is of my blood, one whom I saved from death in a strange way, not because she was of my blood but that I might make an experiment with her. Women, as you who are wise and have seen much will know, are in truth superior to men, though, because they are weaker in body, men have the upper hand of them and think themselves their masters, a state they are forced to accept because they must live and can not defend themselves. Yet their brains are keener, as an assegai is keener than a hoe; they are more in touch with the hidden things that shape out fate for people and for nations; they are more faithful and more patient, and, by instinct if not by reason, more far-seeing, or at least the best of them are so, and by their best, like men, they should be judged.

"Yet this is the hole in their shield. When they love they become the slaves of love, and for love's sake all else is brought to naught, and for this reason they can not be trusted. With men, as you know, this is otherwise. They, too, love, but always behind there is something greater than love, although often they do not understand what that may be. To be powerful, therefore, a woman must be one who does not love too much. If she can not love at all, then she is hated and has no power, but she must not love too much.

"Once I thought that I had found such a woman; she was named Mameena, whom all men worshipped and who played with all men, as I played with her. But what was the end of it? Just as things were going very well she learned to love too much some man of strange notions who would have thwarted me and brought everything to nothing, and therefore I had to kill her, for which I was sorry."

Here he paused to take some more snuff, watching me over the spoon as he drew it up his great nostrils, but as I said nothing, went on:

"Now after Mameena was dead I bethought me that I would rear up a woman who could still love but should never love a man and therefore never become mad or foolish, because I believed that it was only man who in taking her heart from woman, would take her wits also. This child, Nombé, came to my hand, and as I thought, so I did. Never mind how I did it, by medicine perhaps, by magic perhaps, by watering her pride, making it grow tall perhaps, or by all three. At least it was done, and this I know of Nombé, she will never care for any man except as a woman may care for a brother.

"But now see what happens. She, the wise, the instructed, the man-despiser, meets a woman of another race who is sweet and good, and learns to love her, not as maids and mothers love, but as one loves the spirit that she worships. Yes, yes, to her she is a goddess to be worshiped, one whom she desires to serve with all her heart

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and strength, to bow down before, making offerings, and at the end to follow into death. So it comes about that this Nombé, whose mind I thought to make as the wings of a bird floating on the air while it searches for its prey, has become even madder than other women. It is a disappointment to me, Macumazahn."

"It may be a disappointment to you, Zikali, and all that you say is very interesting. But to us it is a danger. Tell me, will you command Nombé to cease from her folly?"

"Will I forbid the mist to rise, or the wind to blow, or the lightning to strike? As she is, she is. Her heart is filled with black jealousy of Mauriti and of you, as a butcher's gourd is filled with blood, for she is not one who desires that her goddess should have other worshippers; she would keep her for herself alone."

"Then in this way or in that the gourd must be emptied, Zikali, lest we should be forced to drink from it and that black blood should poison us."

"How, unless it be broken, Macumazahn? If Heddana departs and leaves her, she will go mad, and accompany her she can not, for her spirit dwells here," and he tapped his own breast. "It would pull her back again and she would become a great trouble to me, for then that spirit of hers would not suffer me to sleep, with its continual startings in search of what it had lost, and its returnings empty-handed.

"Well, have no fear, for at the worst the bowl can be broken and the blood poured upon the earth, as I have broken finer bowls than this before; had I all the bits of them they would make a heap so high, Macumazahn!" and he held out his hand on a level with his head, a gesture that made my back creep. "I will tell her this and it may keep her quiet for a while. Of poison you need not be afraid, since unlike mine, her spirit hates it. It is not one of its weapons as it is with mine. But of spells, beware, for her spirit has some which are very powerful."

Now I jumped up, filled with indignation, saying—

"I do not believe in Nombé's spells, and in any case how am I to guard against them?"

"If you do not believe there is no need to guard, and if you do believe, then it is for you to find out how to guard, Macumazahn. Oh! I could tell you the story of a white teacher who did not believe and would not guard—but never mind, never mind. Good-by, Macumazahn, I will speak with Nombé. Ask her for a lock of her hair to wear upon your heart after she has enchanted it. The charm is good against spells. O-ho-Oho-o! What fools we all are, white and black together! That is what Cetewayo is thinking today."

After this Nombé became much more agreeable. That is to say she was very polite, her smile was more fixed and her eyes more unfathomable than ever. Evidently Zikali *had* spoken to her and she had listened.

Yet to tell the truth my distrust of this handsome young woman grew deeper day by day. I recognized that there was a great gulf between her and the normal, that she was a creature fashioned by Zikali who had trained her as a gardener trains a tree, nay, who had done more, who had grafted some foreign growth of exotic and unnatural spiritualism on to her primitive nature. The nature remained the same, but the graft or grafts bore strange flowers and fruit, unholy flowers and poisonous fruit. Therefore she was not to blame—sometimes I wonder whether in this curious world, could people see their past and their future, anybody is to blame for anything—but this did not make her the less dangerous.

Some talks I had with her only increased my apprehensions, for I found that in a way she had no conscience. Life, she told me, was but a dream, and all its laws as evolved by man were but illusions. The real life was elsewhere. There was the lake on which the flower of our true existence floated. Without this unseen lake of supernatural water the flower could not float; indeed there would be no flower. Moreover, the flower did not matter; sometimes it would have this shape and color, sometimes that. It was but a thing destined to grow and bloom and rot, and during its day to be ugly or to be beautiful, to smell sweet or ill, as it might chance, and ultimately to be absorbed back into the general water of Life.

I pointed out to her that all flowers had roots which grew in soil. Looking at an orchid-like plant that crept along the bough of a tree, she answered that this was not true, as some grew upon air. But however this might be, the soil or the moisture in

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the air was distilled from thousands of other flower lives that had flourished in their day and been forgotten. It did not matter when they died or however many other flowers they choked that they might live. Yet each flower had its own spirit which always had been and always would be.

I asked her of the end and the object of that spirit. She answered darkly that she did not know and if she did, would not say, but that these were very dreadful.

Such were some of her vague and figurative assertions which I only record to indicate their uncomfortable and indeed but half human nature. I forgot to add that she declared that every flower of life had a twin flower of life, which in each successive growth it was bound to find and bloom beside, or wither to the root and spring again, and that ultimately these two would become one, and as one flourish eternally. Of all of which I understood and understand little, except that she had grasped the elements of some truth which she could not express in clear and definite language.

ONE day I was seated in Zikali's hut whither by permission I had come to ask the latest news, when suddenly Nombé appeared and crouched down before him.

"Who gave you leave to enter here, and what is your business?" he asked angrily.

"Home of Spirits," she replied in a humble voice, "be not angry with your servant. Necessity gave me leave, and my business is to tell you that strangers approach."

"Who are they that dare to enter the Black Kloof unannounced?"

"Cetewayo the King is one of them, the others I do not know, but they are many, armed all of them. They approach your gate; before a man can count two hundred they will be here."

"Where are the white chief and the lady Heddana?" asked Zikali.

"By good fortune they have gone by the secret path to the table-land and will not be back till sunset. They wished to be alone, so I did not accompany them, and Macumazahn here said that he was too weary to do so." (This was true. Also like Nombé I thought that they wished to be alone.)

"Good. Go, tell the king that I knew of his coming and am awaiting him. Bid my servants kill the ox that is in the kraal, the fat ox that they thought is sick and therefore fit food for a sick king," he added bitterly.

She glided away like a startled snake. Then Zikali turned to me and said:

"Macumazahn, you are in great danger. If you are found here you will be killed, and so will the others to whom I will send warning not to return till this king has gone away. Go at once to join them. No, it is too late, I hear them come.

"Take that kaross, cover yourself with it and lie among the baskets and beerpots here near the entrance of the hut in the deepest of the shadows, so that if any enter, perchance you will not be found. I too am in danger who shall be held to account for all that has happened. Perhaps they will kill me, if I can be killed. If so, get away with the others as best you can.

"Nombé will tell you where your horses are hidden. In that case let Heddana take Nombé with her, for when I am dead she will go, and shake her off in Natal if she troubles her. Whatever chances, remember, Macumazahn, that I have done my best to keep my word to you and to protect you and your friends. Now I go to look on this pricked bladder who was once a king."

He scrambled from the hut with slow, toad-like motions, while I, with motions that were anything but slow, grabbed the gray catskin kaross and ensconced myself among the beerpots and mats in such a position that my head, over which I set a three-legged carved stool of Zikali's own cutting, was but a few inches to the left of the door-hole and therefore in the deepest of the shadows. Thence by stretching out my neck a little, I could see through the hole, also hear all that passed outside.

Unless a deliberate search of the hut should be made I was fairly safe from observation, even if it were entered by strangers. One fear I had, however; it was lest the dog Lost should get into the place and smell me out. I had left him tied to the center pole in my own hut because he hated Zikali and always growled at him. But suppose he gnawed through the cord or any one let him loose!

Scarcely had Zikali seated himself in his accustomed place before the hut, than the gate of the outer fence was opened and approaching through it I saw forty or fifty fierce and way-worn men. In front of them, riding on a tired horse that was led by a

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servant, was Cetewayo himself. He was assisted to dismount, or rather threw his great bulk into the arms that were waiting to receive him.

Then after some words with his following and with one of Zikali's people, followed by three or four *indunas* and leaning on the arm of Umnyamana, the Prime Minister, he entered the enclosure, the rest remaining without. Zikali, who sat as if asleep, suddenly appeared to wake up and perceive him. Struggling to his feet he lifted his right arm and gave the royal salute of Bayéte, and with it titles of praise, such as "Black One!" "Elephant!" "Earth-Shaker!" "Conqueror!" "Eater-up of the White Men!" "Child of the Wild Beast (Chaka) whose teeth are sharper than the Wild Beast's ever were!" and so on, until Cetewayo, growing impatient, cried out:

"Be silent, Wizard. Is this a time for fine words? Do you not know my case that you offend my ears with them? Give us food to eat if you have it, after which I would speak with you alone. Be swift also, since here I may not stay for long, for the white dogs are at my heels."

"I knew that you were coming, O king, to honor my poor house with a visit," said Zikali slowly, "and therefore the ox is already killed and the meat will soon be on the fire. Meanwhile drink a sup of beer, and rest."

He clapped his hands, whereon Nombé and some servants appeared with pots of beer, of which, after Zikali had tasted it to show that it was not poisoned, the king and his people drank thirstily. Then it was taken to those outside.

"What is this that my ears hear?" asked Zikali when Nombé and the others had gone. "That the white dogs are on the spoor of the Black Bull?"

Cetewayo nodded heavily and answered:

"My *impis* were broken to pieces on the plain of Ulundi; the cowards ran from the bullets as children run from bees. My kraals are burnt and I, the king, with but a faithful remnant fly for my life. The prophecy of the Black One has come true. The people of the Zulus are stamped flat beneath the feet of the great white people."

"I remember that prophecy, O king. Mopo told it to me within an hour of the death of the Black One when he gave me the little red-handled assegai that he snatched from the Black One's hand to do the deed. It makes me almost young again to think of it, although even then I was old," replied Zikali in a dreamy voice like one who speaks to himself.

Hearing him from under my kaross I bethought me that he had really grown old at last, who for the moment evidently forgot the part which this very assegai had played a few months before in the Vale of Bones. Well, even the greatest masters make such slips at times when their minds are full of other things. But if Zikali forgot, Cetewayo and his councillors remembered, as I could see by the look of quick intelligence that flashed from face to face.

"So! Mopo the murderer, he who vanished from the land after the death of my uncle Dingaan, gave you the little red assegai, did he, Opener of Roads! And but a few months ago that assegai, which old Sigananda knew again, thrown by the hand of the Inkosazana-y-Zulu, drew blood from my body after the white man, Macumazahn, had severed its shaft with his bullet. Now tell me, Opener of Roads, how did it pass from your keeping into that of the spirit Nomkubulwana?"

At this question I distinctly saw a shiver shake the frame of Zikali who realized too late the terrible mistake he had made. Yet as only the great can do, he retrieved and even triumphed over his error.

"Oho-ho!" he laughed. "Who am I that I can tell how such things happen? Do you not know, O king, that the spirits leave what they will and take what they will, whether it be but a blade of grass, or the life of a man—" here he looked at Cetewayo—"or even of a people? Sometimes they take the shadow and sometimes the substance, since spirit or matter, all is theirs. As for the little assegai, I lost it years ago. I remember that the last time I saw it it was in the hands of a woman named Mameena to whom I showed it as a strange and bloody thing. After her death I found that it was gone, so doubtless she took it with her to the underworld and there gave it to the Queen Nomkubulwana, with whom you may remember this Mameena returned from that underworld yonder in the Vale of Bones."

"It may be so," said Cetewayo sullenly, "yet it was no spirit iron that cut my thigh. But what do I know of the ways of spirits? Wizard, I would speak with you in your hut alone where no ear can hear us."

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"My hut is the king's," answered Zikali, "yet let the king remember that those spirits of which he does not know the ways, can always hear, yes, even the thoughts of men, and on them do judgment."

"Fear not," said Cetewayo, "amongst many other things I remember this also."

Then Zikali turned and crept into the hut, whispering as he passed me—

"Lie silent for your life."

And Cetewayo, having bidden his retinue to depart outside the fence and await him there, followed after him.

They sat them down on either side of the smoldering fire and stared at each other through the thin smoke there in the gloom of the hut. By turning my head that the foot of the king had brushed as he passed, I could watch them both. Cetewayo spoke the first in a hoarse, slow voice, saying:

"Wizard, I am in danger of my life and I have come to you who know all the secrets of this land, that you may tell me in what place I may hide where the white men can not find me. It must be told into my ear alone, since I dare not trust the matter to any other, at any rate until I must. They are traitors every man of them, yes, even those who seem to be most faithful. The fallen man has no friends, least of all if he chances to be a king. Only the dead will keep his counsel. Tell me of the place I need."

"Dingaan, who was before you, once asked this same thing of me, O king, when he was flying from Panda, your father, and the Boers. I gave him advice that he did not take, but sought a refuge of his own upon a certain ghost-mountain. What happened to him there that Mopo, of whom you spoke a while ago, can tell you if he still lives."

"Surely you are an ill-omened night-bird who thus croak to me continually of the death of kings," broke in Cetewayo with suppressed rage, then calming himself with an effort added, "Tell me now, where shall I hide?"

"Would you know, king? Then hearken. On the south slope of the Ingome Range west of the Ibululwana River, on the outskirts of the great forest, there is a kloof whereof the entrance, which only one man can pass at a time, is covered by a thicket of thorns and marked by a black rock shaped like a great toad with an open mouth, or, as some say, like myself, The-Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born

"Near to this rock dwells an old woman, blind of one eye and lacking a hand, which the Black One cut off shortly before his death, because when he killed her father, she saw the future and prophesied a like death to him, although then she was but a child. This woman is of our company, being a witch-doctoress. I will send a spirit to her, if you so will it, to warn her to watch for you and your company, O king, and show you the mouth of the kloof, where are some old huts and water. There you will never be found unless you are betrayed."

"Who can betray me when none know whither I am going?" asked Cetewayo. "Send the spirit, send it at once, that this one-armed witch may make ready."

"What is the hurry, king, seeing that the forest is far away? Yet be it as you will. Keep silence now, lest evil should befall you."

Then of a sudden Zikali seemed to go off into one of his trances. His form grew rigid, his eyes closed, his face became fixed as if in death, and foam appeared upon his lips. He was a dreadful sight to look on, there in the gloomy hut.

Cetewayo watched him and shivered. Then he opened his blanket and I perceived that fastened about him by a loop of hide in such a fashion that it could be drawn out in a moment, was the blade of a broad assegai, the shaft of which was shortened to about six inches.

His hand grasped this shaft, and I understood that he was contemplating the murder of Zikali. Then it seemed to me that he changed his mind and that his lips shaped the words—"Not yet," though whether he reallys poke them I do not know. At least he withdrew his hand and closed the blanket.

Slowly Zikali opened his eyes, staring at the roof of the hut, whence came a curious sound as of squeaking bats. He looked like a dead man coming to life again. For a few moments he turned up his ear as though he listened to the squeaking, then said:

"It is well. The spirit that I summoned has visited her of our company who is named One-hand and returned with the answer. Did you not hear it speaking in the thatch, O king?"

"I heard something, Wizard," answered Cetewayo in an awed voice. "I thought it was a bat."

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"A bat it is, O king, one with wide wings and swift. This bat says that my sister, One-hand, will meet you on the third day from now at this hour on the further side of the ford of the Ibululwana, where three milk-trees grow together on a knoll. She will be sitting under the center milk-tree and will wait for two hours, no more, to show you the secret entrance to the kloof."

"The road is rough and long, I shall have to hurry when worn out with traveling," said Cetewayo.

"That is so, O king. Therefore my counsel is that you begin the journey as soon as possible, especially as I seem to hear the baying of the white dogs not far away."

"By Chaka's head! I will not," growled Cetewayo, "who thought to sleep here in peace this night."

"As the king wills. All that I have is the king's. Only then One-hand will not be waiting and some other place of hiding must be found, since this is known to me only and to her; also that spirit which I sent will make no second journey, nor can I travel to show it to the king."

"Yes, Wizard, it is known to you and to myself. Methinks it would be better were it known to me alone. I have a spoonful of snuff to share (i. e. a bone to pick) with you, Wizard. It would seem that you set my feet and those of the Zulu people upon a false road, yonder in the Vale of Bones, causing me to declare war upon the white queen and thereby bringing us all to ruin."

"Mayhap my memory grows bad, O king, for I do not remember that I did these things. I remember that the spirit of a certain Mameena whom I called up from the dead, prophesied victory to the king, which victory has been his. Also it prophesied other victories to the king in a far land across the water, which victories doubtless shall be his in due season; for myself I gave no counsel to the king or to his *indunas* and generals."

"You lie, Wizard," exclaimed Cetewayo hoarsely. "Did you not summon the shape of the Princess of Heaven to be the sign of war, and did she not hold in her hand that assegai of the Black One's which you have told me was in your keeping? How did it pass from your keeping into the hand of a spirit?"

"As to that matter I have spoken, O king. For the rest, is Nomkubulwana my servant to come and go at my bidding?"

"I think so," said Cetewayo coldly. "I think also that you who know the place where I purpose to hide, would do well to forget it. Surely you have lived too long, O Opener of Roads, and done enough evil to the House of Senzangacona, which you ever hated."

So he spoke, and once more I saw his hand steal toward the spearhead which was hidden beneath the blanket that he wore.

Zikali saw it also and laughed.

"Oho!" he laughed, "forgetting all my warnings and that the day of my death will be his own, the king thinks to kill me because I am old and feeble and alone and unarmed. He thinks to kill me as the Black One thought, as Dingaan thought, as even Panda thought, yet I live on to this day. Well, I bear no malice since it is natural that the king should wish to kill one who knows the secret of where he would hide himself for his own life's sake.

"That spearhead which the king is fingering is sharp, so sharp that my bare breast can not turn its edge. I must find me a shield! I must find me a shield! Fire, you are not yet dead. Awake, make smoke to be my shield!" and he waved his long, monkey-like arms over the embers, from which instantly there sprang up a reek of thin white smoke that appeared to take a vague and indefinite shape which suggested the shadow of a man; for to me it seemed a nebulous and wavering shadow, no more.

"What are you staring at, O king?" went on Zikali in a fierce and thrilling voice. "Who is it that you see? Who has the fire sent to be my shield? Ghosts are so thick here that I do not know. I can not tell one of them from the other. Who is it? Who, who of all that you have slain and who therefore are your foes?"

"Umbelazi, my brother," groaned Cetewayo. "My brother Umbelazi stands before me with spear raised; he whom I brought to his death at the battle of the Tugela. His eyes flame upon me, his spear is raised to strike. He speaks words I can not understand. Protect me, O Wizard, Lord of Spirits, protect me from the spirit of Umbelazi."

Zikali laughed wildly and continued to wave his arms above the fire from which smoke poured ever more densely, till the hut was full of it.

When it cleared away again Cetewayo was gone!

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"Saw you ever the like of that?" said Zikali, addressing the kaross under which I was sweltering. "Tell me, Macumazahn."

"Yes," I answered, "when in this very hut you seemed to produce the shape, also out of smoke, I think, of one whom I used to know. Say, how do you do it, Zikali?"

"Do it. Who knows? Perchance I do nothing. Perchance I think and you fools see, no more. Or perchance the spirits of the dead who are so near to us, come at my call and take themselves bodies out of the charmed smoke of my fire. You white men are wise, answer your own question, Macumazahn. At least that smoke or that spirit saved me from a spear thrust in the heart, wherewith Cetewayo was minded to pay me for showing him a hiding-place which he desired should be secret to himself alone.

"Well, well, I can pay as well as Cetewayo and my count is longer. Now lie you still, Macumazahn, for I go out to watch. He will not bide long in this place which he deems haunted and ill-omened. He will be gone ere sunset, that is within an hour, and sleep elsewhere."

Then he crept from the hut and presently, though I could see nothing, for now the gate of the fence was shut, I heard voices debating and finally that of Cetewayo say angrily:

"Have done! It is my will. You can eat your food outside of this place which is bewitched; the girl will show us where are the huts of which the wizard speaks."

A few minutes later Zikali crept back into the hut, laughing to himself.

"All is safe," he said, "and you can come out of your hole, old jackal. He who calls himself a king is gone, taking with him those whom he thinks faithful, most of whom are but waiting a chance to betray him. What did I say, a king? Nay, in all Africa there is no slave so humble or so wretched as this broken man. Oh, feather by feather I have plucked my fowl and by and by I shall cut his throat. You will be there, Macumazahn, you will be there."

"I hope not," I answered as I mopped my brow. "We have been near enough to throat-cutting this afternoon to last me a long while. Where has the king gone?"

"Not far, Macumazahn. I have sent Nombé to guide him to the huts in the little dip five spearthrows to the right of the mouth of the kloof where live the old herdsman and his people who guard my cattle. He and all the rest are away with the cattle that are hidden in the Ceza Forest out of reach of the white men, so the huts are empty. Oh, now I read what you are thinking. I do not mean that he should be taken there. It is too near my house and the king still has friends."

"Why did you send Nombé?" I asked.

"Because he would have no other guide, who does not trust my men. He means to keep her with him for some days and then let her go, and thus she will be out of mischief. Meanwhile you and your friends can depart untroubled by her fancies, and join the white men who are near. Tomorrow you shall start."

"That is good," I said with a sigh of relief. Then an idea struck me and I added, "I suppose no harm will come to Nombé, who might be thought to know too much?"

"I hope not," he replied indifferently, "but that is a matter for her spirit to decide. Now go, Macumazahn, for I am weary."

I also was weary after my prolonged seclusion under that very hot skin rug. For be it remembered I was not yet strong again, and, although this was not the real reason why I had stopped behind when the others went to the plateau, I still grew easily tired. My real reason was that of Nombé—that I thought they preferred to be alone.

I looked about me and saw with relief that Cetewayo and every man of his retinue were really gone. They had not even waited to eat the ox that had been killed for them, but had carried off the meat with other provisions to their sleeping-place outside the kloof. Having made sure of this I went to my hut and loosed Lost that fortunately enough had been unable to gnaw through the thick buffalo-hide rein with which I had fastened him to the pole.

He greeted me with rapture as if we had been parted for years. Had he belonged to Ulysses himself he could not have been more joyful. When one is despondent and lonesome, how grateful is the whole-hearted welcome of a dog which, we are sometimes tempted to think, is the only creature that cares for us in the world. Every other living thing has side interests of its own, but that of a dog is centered in its master, though it is true that it also dreams affectionately of dinner and rabbits.

Then with Lost at my feet I sat outside the hut, smoking and waiting for the return

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of Anscombe and Heda. Presently I caught sight of them in the gloaming.

Their arms were around one another, and in some remarkable way they had managed to dispose their heads, forgetting that the sky was still light behind them, in such fashion that it was difficult to tell one from the other. I reflected that it was a good thing that at last we were escaping from this confounded kloof and country for one where they could marry, and became afflicted with a sneezing fit.

Heda asked where Nombé was and why supper was not ready, for Nombé played the part of cook and parlor-maid combined. I told her something of what had happened, whereon Heda, who did not appreciate its importance in the least, remarked that she, Nombé, might as well have put on the pot before she went and done sundry other things which I forget.

Ultimately we got something to eat and turned in, Heda grumbling a little because she must sleep alone, for she had grown used to the company of the ever-watchful Nombé, who made her bed across the door-hole of the hut.

Anscombe was soon lost in dreams, if he did dream, but I could not sleep well that night. I was fearful of I knew not what, and so, I think, was Lost, for he fidgeted and kept poking me with his nose.

At last, I think it must have been about two hours after midnight, he began to growl. I could hear nothing, although my ears are sharp, but as he went on growling I crept to the door-hole and drew aside the board. Lost slipped out and vanished, while I waited, listening. Presently I thought I heard a soft footfall and a whisper, also that I saw the shape of a woman which reminded me of Nombé, shown faintly by the starlight. It vanished in a moment and Lost returned wagging his tail, as he might well have done if it were Nombé who was attached to the dog.

As nothing further happened I went back to bed, reflecting that I was probably mistaken, since Nombé had been sent away for some days by Zikali and would scarcely dare to return at once, even if she could do so.

Shortly before daylight Lost began to growl again in a subdued and thunderous fashion. This time I got up and dressed myself more or less. Then I went out.

The dawn was just breaking and by its light I saw a strange scene. About fifty yards away in the narrow neck that ran over some rocks to the site of our huts, stood what seemed to be the goddess Nomkubulwana as I had seen her on the granite point in the Vale of Bones. She wore the same radiant dress and in the dim glow had all the appearance of a white woman.

I stood amazed, thinking that I dreamt, when from round the bend emerged a number of Zulus, creeping forward stealthily with raised spears. They caught sight of the supernatural figure which barred their road, halted and whispered to each other. Then they turned to fly, but before they went one of them, as it seemed to me through sheer terror, hurled his assegai at the figure which remained still and unmoved.

In thirty seconds they were gone; in sixty their footsteps had died away. Then the figure wheeled slowly round and by the strengthening light I perceived that a spear transfixed its breast.

As it sank to the ground I ran up to it. It was Nombé with her face and arms whitened and her life-blood running down the glittering feather robe.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MADNESS OF NOMBÉ

THE dog reached Nombé first and began to lick her face, its tongue removing patches of the white which had not had time to dry. She was lying, her back supported by one of the rocks.

With her left hand she patted the dog's head feebly and with her right drew out the assegai from her body, letting it fall upon the ground. Recognizing me she smiled in her usual mysterious fashion and said:

"All is well, Macumazahn, all is very well. I have deserved to die and I do not die in vain."

"Don't talk. Let me see your wound!" I exclaimed.

She opened her robe and pointed; it was quite a small gash beneath the breast from which blood ebbed slowly.

"Let it be, Macumazahn" she said. "I am bleeding inside and it is mortal. But I shall not die yet. Listen to me while I have my mind. Yesterday when Mauriti and Heddana went up to the plain I wished to go with them because I had news that Zulus

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were wandering everywhere and thought that I might be able to protect my mistress from danger. Mauriti spoke to me roughly, telling me that I was not wanted. Of that I thought little, for to such words I am accustomed from him; moreover, they are to be forgiven to a man in love.

"But it did not end there, for my lady Heddana also pierced me with her tongue, which hurt more than this spear thrust does, Macumazahn, for I could see that her speech had been prepared and that she took this chance to throw it at me. She said that I did not know where I should sit; that I was a thorn beneath her nail and that whenever she wished to talk with Mauriti, or with you, Macumazahn, I was ever there with my ear open like the mouth of a gourd. She commanded me in future to come only when I was called; all of which things I am sure Mauriti had taught her, who in herself is too gentle even to think them—unless *you* taught her, Macumazahn."

I shook my head and she went on:

"No, it was not you who also are too gentle, and having suffered yourself, can feel for those who suffer, which Mauriti who has never suffered can not do. Still, you too thought me a trouble, one that sticks in the flesh like a hooked thorn, or a tick from the grass, and can not be unfastened. You spoke to the Master about it and he spoke to me."

This time I nodded in assent.

"I do not blame you, Macumazahn; indeed now I see that you were wise, for what right has a poor black doctoress to seek the love, or even to look upon the face of the great white lady whom for a little while Fate had caused to walk upon the same path with her? But yesterday I forgot that, Macumazahn, for you see we are all of us not one self, but many selves, and each self has its times of rule. Nombé alive was one woman, Nombé dying is another, and doubtless Nombé dead will be a third, unless, as she prays, she should sleep for ever.

"Macumazahn, those words of Heddana's were to me what gall is to sweet milk. My blood clotted and my heart turned sour. It was not against her that I was angry, because that can never happen, but against Mauriti and against you. My spirit whispered in my ear. It said, 'If Mauriti and Macumazahn were dead the lady Heddana would be left alone in a strange land. Then she would learn to rest upon you as upon a stick, and learn to love the stick on which she rested, though it be so rough and homely.' But how can I kill them, I asked of my spirit, and myself escape death?

" 'Poison is forbidden to you by the pact between us,' answered my spirit, 'yet I will show you a way, who am bound to serve you in all things good or ill.'

"Then we nodded to each other in my breast, Macumazahn, and I waited for what should happen who knew that my spirit would not lie. Yes, I waited for a chance to kill you both, forgetting, as the wicked forget in their madness, that even if I were not found out, soon or late Heddana would guess the truth and then, even if she had learned to love me a thousand times more than she ever could, would come to hate me as a mother hates a snake that has slain her child. Or even if she never learned or guessed in life, after death she would learn and hunt me and spit on me from world to world as a traitoress and a murderer, one who has sinned past pardon."

Here she seemed to grow faint and I turned to seek for help. But she caught hold of my coat and said—

"Hear me out, Macumazahn, or I will run after you till I fall and die."

So thinking it best, I stayed and she went on:

"My spirit, which must be an evil one since Zikali gave it me when I was made a doctoress, dealt truly with me, for presently the king and his people came. Moreover, my spirit brought it about that the king would have no other guide but me to lead him to the kraal where he slept last night, and I went as though unwillingly.

"At the kraal the king sent for me and questioned me in a dark hut, pretending to be alone, but I who am a doctoress knew that two other men were in that hut, taking note of all my words. He asked me of the Inkosazana-y-Zulu who appeared in the Vale of Bones and of the little assegai she held in her hand, and of the magic of the Opener of Roads, and many other things. I said that I knew nothing of the Inkosazana, but that without doubt my master was a great magician. He did not believe me. He threatened that I should be tortured very horribly and was about to call his servants to torment me till I told the truth.

"Then my spirit spoke in my heart saying, 'Now the door is open to you, as I promised. Tell the king of the two white men whom

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the master hides, and he will send to kill them, leaving the lady Heddana and you alone together.' So I pretended to be afraid and told him, whereon he laughed and answered—

" 'For your sake I am glad, girl, that you have spoken the truth; besides it is useless to torture a witch, since then the spirit in her only vomits lies.'

"Next he called aloud and a man came, who it was I could not see in the dark. The king commanded him to take me to one of the other huts and tie me up there to the roof-pole. The man obeyed, but he did not tie me up; he only blocked the hut with the door-board, and sat with me there in the dark alone.

"Now I grew cunning and began to talk with him, spreading a net of sweet words, as the fowler spreads a net for cranes from which he would tear the crests. Soon by his talk I found out that the king and his people knew more than I guessed. Macumazahn, they had seen the cart which still stands under the overhanging rock by the mouth of the cave.

"I asked him if that were all, pretending that the cart belonged to my master, to whom it had been brought from the field of Isandhlwana, that he might be drawn about in it, who was too weak to walk.

"The man said that if I would kiss him he would tell me everything. I bade him tell me first, swearing that then I would kiss him. Yes, Macumazahn, I, whom no man's lips have ever touched, fell as low a this.

"So he grew foolish and told me. He told me that they had also seen a *kappie*, such as white women wear, hanging on the hut fence, and I remembered that after washing the headdress of my mistress I had set it there to dry in the sun. He told me also that the king suspected that she who wore that *kappie* was she who had played the part of the Inkosazana in the Vale of Bones. I asked him what the king would do about the matter, at the same time denying that there was any white woman in the Black Kloof. He said that at dawn the king would send and kill these foreign rats, whom the Opener of Roads kept in the thatch of his hut.

"Now he drew near and asked his pay. I gave it to him—with a knife-point, Macumazahn. Oh! That was a good thrust. He never spoke again. Then I slipped away, for all the others were asleep, and was here a little after midnight."

"I thought I saw you, Nombé," I said, "but was not sure, so I did nothing."

She smiled and answered:

"Ah! I was afraid that the Watcher-by-Night would be watching by night; also the dog ran up to me, but he knew me and I sent him back again. Now while I was coming home, thoughts entered my heart. I saw, as one sees by a lightning flash, all that I had done. The king and his people were not sure that the master was hiding white folk here and would never have sent back to kill them on the chance. I had made them sure, as indeed, being mad, I meant to do. Moreover, in throwing spears at the kites I had killed my own dove, since it was on the false Inkosazana who had caused them to declare war and brought the land to ruin, that they wished to be avenged, and perchance on him who taught her her part, not on one or two wandering white men. I saw that when Cetewayo's people came, and there were many more of them outside, several hundreds I think, they would shave the whole head and burn the whole tree. Every one in the kloof would be killed.

How could I undo the knot that I had tied and stamp out the fire that I had lit? That was the question. I bethought me of coming to you, but without arms how could you help? I bethought me of going to the master, but I was ashamed. Also, what could he do with but a few servants, for the most of his people are away with the cattle? He is too weak to climb the steep path to the plain above, nor was there time to gather folk to carry him. Lastly, even if there were time, which there was not, and we went thither they would track us out and kill us. For the rest I did not care, nor for myself, but that the lady Heddana should be butchered who was more to me than a hundred lives, and through my treachery—ah! For that I cared.

"I called on my spirit to help me, but it would not come. My spirit was dead in me because now I would do good and not ill. Yet another spirit came, that of one whom once you knew. She came angrily like a storm, and I shrank before her. She said, 'Vile witch, you have plotted to murder Macumazahn, and for that you shall answer to me before another sun has set over this earth of yours. Now you seek a way of

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escape from your own wickedness. Well, it can be had, but at a price.'

" 'What price, O Lady of Death?' I asked.

" 'The price of your own life, Witch.'

"I laughed into that ghost face of hers and said:

" 'Is this all? Be swift and show me the way, O Lady of Death, and afterwards we will balance our account.'

"Then she whispered into the ear of my heart and was gone. I ran on for the dawn was near. I whitened myself, I put on the glittering cloak and powdered my hair with the sparkling earth. I took a little stick in my hand since I could find no spear (we had no time to search), and just as day began to break, I crept out and stood in the bend of the path.

"The slayers came, twelve or so of them, but behind were many more. They saw the Inkosazana-y-Zulu barring their way and were afraid. They fled, but out of very terror one of them threw a spear which went home, as I knew it would. He watched to see if I should fall, but I would not fall. Then he fled faster than the rest, knowing himself accursed who had lifted steel against the Queen of Heaven, and oh, I am glad, I am glad."

She ceased, exhausted, yet with a great exultation in her beautiful eyes; indeed a that moment she looked a most triumphant creature. I stared at her, thrilled through and through. She had been wicked, no doubt, but how splendid was her end; and, thank Heaven! she was troubled with no thought of what might befall her after that end, although I was sure she believed that she would live again.

I knew not what to do. I did not like to leave her, especially as no earthly power could help her case, since slowly but quite surely she was bleeding to death from an internal wound. By now the sun was up and Zikali's people were about. One of them appeared suddenly and saw, then with a howl of terror turned to fly away.

"Fool! Fool!" I cried. "Go summon the lady Heddana and the Inkosi Mauriti. Bid them come swiftly if they would see the doctoress Nombé before she dies."

The man leapt off like a buck, and within a few minutes I saw Heda and Anscombe running towards us, half dressed, and went to meet them.

"What is it?" she gasped.

"I have only time to tell you this," I answered. "Nombé is dying. She gave her life to save you; how, I will explain afterwards. The assegai that pierced her was meant for your heart. Go, thank her, and bid her farewell. Anscombe, stop back with me."

We stood still and watched from a little distance. Heda knelt down and put her arms about Nombé. They whispered together into each other's ears. Then they kissed.

It was at this moment that Zikali appeared, leaning on two of his servants. By some occult art or instinct he seemed to know all that had happened, and oh, he looked terrible. He crouched down in front of the dying woman and, toadlike, spat his venom at her.

"You lost your spirit, did you?" he said. "Well, it came back to me laden with the black honey of your treachery, to me, its home, as a bee comes to its hive. It has told me everything, and well for you, witch, it is that you are dying. But think not that you shall escape me there in the world below, for thither I will follow you. Curses on you, traitress, who would have betrayed me and brought all my plans to naught. *Owl* In a day to come I will pay you back a full harvest for this seed of shame that you have sown."

She opened her eyes and looked at him, then answered quite softly:

"I think your chain is broken, O Zikali, no more my master. I think that love has cut your chain in two and I fear you never more. Keep the spirit you lent me; it is yours, but the rest of me is my own, and in the house of my heart another comes to dwell."

Then once more she stretched out her arms towards Heda and murmuring, "Sister, forget me not, Sister, who will await you for a thousand years," she passed away.

It was a good ending to a bad business, and I confess I felt glad when it was finished. Only afterwards I regretted very much that I had not found an opportunity to ask her whether or no she had masqueraded as Mameena in the Valley of Bones. Now it is too late.

We buried poor Nombé decently in her own little hut where she used to practise her incantations. Zikali and his people wished apparently to throw her to the vultures for some secret reason that had to do with their superstitions.

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But Heda, who, now that Nombé was dead, developed a great affection for her not unmixed with a certain amount of compunction for which really she had no cause, withstood him to his face and insisted upon a decent interment. So she was laid to earth still plastered with the white pigment and wrapped in the blood-stained feather robe.

I may add that on the following morning one of Zikali's servants informed me solemnly that because of this she had been seen during the night riding up and down the rocks on a baboon as Zulu *umtagati* are supposed to do.

I have small doubt that as soon as we were gone they dug her up again and threw her to the vultures and the jackals according to their first intention.

On this day we at length escaped from the Black Kloof, and in our own cart, for during the night our horses arrived mysteriously from somewhere, in good condition though rather wild.

I went to say good-by to Zikali, who said little, except that we should meet once more after many moons. Anscombe and Heda he would not see at all, but only sent them a message, to the effect that he hoped they would think kindly of him through the long years to come, since he had kept his promise and preserved them safe through many dangers.

I might have answered that he had first of all put them into the dangers, but considered it wise to hold my tongue. I think, however, that he guessed my thought, if one can talk of guessing in connection with Zikali, for he said that they had no reason to thank him, since if he had served their turn they had served his, adding:

"It will be strange in the times to be for the lady Heddana to remember that it was she and no other who crumpled up the Zulus like a frost-bitten Winter reed, since, had she not appeared upon the rock in the Valley of Bones, there would have been no war."

"She did not do this, you did it, Zikali," I said, "making her your tool through love and fear."

"Nay, Macumazahn, I did not do it; it was done by what you call God and I call Fate in whose hand I am the tool. Well, say to the lady Heddana that in payment I will hold back the ghost of Nombé from haunting her, if I can."

SO WE went from that hateful kloof which I have never seen since and hope I shall never see again, two of Zikali's men escorting us until we got into touch with white people. To these we said as little as possible. I think they believed that we were only premature tourists who had made a dash into Zululand to visit some of the battlefields. Indeed none of us ever reported our strange adventures, and after my experience with Kaatje we were particularly careful to say nothing in the hearing of any gentleman connected with the Press.

But as a matter of fact there were so many people moving about and such a continual coming and going of soldiers and their belongings, that after we had managed to buy some decent clothes, which we did at the little town of Newcastle, nobody paid any attention to us.

On our way to Maritzburg one amusing thing did happen. We met Kaatje! It was about sunset that we were driving up a steep hill not far from Howick. At least I was driving, but Anscombe and Heda were walking about a hundred yards ahead of the cart, when suddenly Kaatje appeared over a rise and came face to face with them while taking an evening stroll, or as I concluded afterward, making some journey.

She saw, she stared, she uttered one wild yell, and suddenly bundled over the edge of the road. Never would I have believed that such a fat woman could have run so fast. In a minute she was down the slope and had vanished into a dense kloof where, as night was closing in and we were very tired, it was impossible for us to follow her. Nor did subsequent inquiry in Howick tell us where she was living or whence she came.

Such was the end of Kaatje so far as we were concerned. Doubtless to her dying day she remained, or will remain, a firm believer in ghosts.

Anscombe and Heda were married at Maritzburg as soon as the necessary formalities could be completed. I could not attend the ceremony, which was a disappointment to me and I hope to them, but unfortunately I had a return of my illness and was laid up for a week, owing to the hot sun, perhaps, that struck me on the neck one afternoon coming down the Town Hill where I was obliged to hang on to the rear of the cart because the brakes had given out.

However I was able to send Heda a wedding gift in the shape of her jewels that

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I recovered from the bank, which she had never expected to see again; also to arrange everything about her property.

They went down to Durban for their honeymoon and, some convenient opportunity arising, sailed thence for England. I received an affectionate letter from them both, which I still treasure, thanking me very much for all I had done for them, that after all was little enough. Also Anscombe enclosed a blank check, begging me to fill it in for whatever sum I considered he was indebted to me on the balance of account, I thought this very kind of him and a great mark of confidence, but the check remains blank.

I never saw either of them again, and though I believe that they are both living, for the most part abroad—in Hungary I think—I do not suppose that I ever shall.

When I came to England some years later, after King Solomon's mines had made me rich, I wrote Anscombe a letter. He never answered it, which hurt me at the time. Afterward I remembered that in their fine position it was very natural that they should not wish to renew acquaintance with an individual who had so intimate a knowledge of certain incidents that they probably regarded as hateful, such as the deaths of Marnham and Dr. Todd, and all the surrounding circumstances. If so, I daresay that they were wise, but of course it may have been only carelessness.

It is so easy for busy and fashionable folk not to answer a rather troublesome letter, or to forget to put that answer in the post. Or, indeed, the letter may never have reached them; such things often go astray, especially when people live abroad. At any rate, perhaps through my own fault, we have drifted apart. I daresay they believe that I am dead, or not to be found somewhere in Africa.

However, I always think of them with affection, for Anscombe was one of the best traveling companions I ever had, and his wife a most charming girl, and wonder whether Zikali's prophecy about their children will come true. Good luck go with them!

As it chances, since then I passed the place where the Temple stood, though at a little distance. I had the curiosity, at some inconvenience, to ride round and examine the spot. I suppose that Heda had sold the property, for a back-veld Boer had turned what used to be Todd's hospital into his house.

Close by, grim and gaunt, stood the burnt-out marble walls of the Temple. The veranda was still roofed over, and, standing on the spot whence I had shot the pistol out of Todd's hand, I was filled with many memories. I could trace the whole plan of the buildings and visited that part of it which had been Marnham's room.

The iron safe that stood in the corner had been taken away, but the legs of the bedstead remained. Also not far from it, overgrown with running plants, was a little heap which I took to be the ashes of his desk, for bits of burnt wood protruded. I grubbed among them with my foot and riding-crop and presently came across the remains of a charred human skull. Then I departed in a hurry.

My way took me through the yellowwood grove, past the horns of the blue wildebeeste which still lay there, past that mudhole also into which Todd had fallen dead. Here, however, I made no more search, who had seen enough of bones. To this day I do not know whether he still lies beneath the slimy ooze, or was removed and buried.

Also I saw the site of our wagon camp where the Basutos attacked us. But I will have done with these reminiscences which induce melancholy, though really there is no reason why they should.

Tout lasse, tout casse, tout passe—everything wears out, everything crumbles, everything vanishes, in the words of the French proverb that my friend Sir Henry Curtis is so fond of quoting, that at last I wrote it down in my pocket-book, only to remember afterward that when I was a boy I had heard it from the lips of an old scamp of the name of Leblanc, who once gave me and another lessons in the Gallic tongue. But of him I have already written in *Marie*, which is the first chapter in the book of the fall of the Zulus. That headed "Child of Storm" is the second. These pages form the third and last. Ah! indeed, *tout lasse, tout casse, tout passe!*

CHAPTER XXIII

THE KRAAL JAZI

NOW I shall pass over all the Zulu history of the next four years, since after all it has nothing to do with my tale

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and I do not pretend to be writing a history.

Sir Garnet Wolseley set up his Kilkenny cat Government in Zululand, or the home authorities did it for him, I do not know which. In place of one king, thirteen chiefs were erected who got to work to cut the throats of each other and of the people.

As I expected would be the case, Zikali informed the military authorities of the secret hiding-place in the Ingome Forest where he suggested to Cetewayo that he should refuge. The ex-king was duly captured there and taken first to the Cape and then to England, where, after the disgrace of poor Sir Bartle Frere, an agitation had been set on foot on his behalf.

Here he saw the Queen and her ministers, once more conquering, as it had been prophesied that he would by her who wore the shape of Mameena at the memorable scene in the Valley of Bones when I was present. Often I have thought of him dressed in a black coat and seated in the villa in Melbury Road in the suburbs of London which I understand is populated by artists. A strange contrast truly to the savage prince receiving the salute of triumph after the Battle of the Tugela in which he won the kingship, or to the royal monarch to whose presence I had been summoned at Ulundi. However, he was brought back to Zululand again by a British man-of-war, re-installed to a limited chieftainship by Sir Theophilus Shepstone, and freed from the strangling embrace of the black coat.

Then of course there was more fighting, as every one knew would happen, except the British Colonial office; indeed all Zululand ran with blood. For in England Cetewayo and his rights, or wrongs, had, like the Boers and their rights, or wrongs, become a matter of party politics to which everything else must give way. Often I wonder whether party politics will not in the end prove the ruin of the British Empire. Well, thank Heaven, I shall not live to learn.

So Cetewayo came back and fought and was defeated by those who once had been his subjects. Now for the last scene, that is all with which I need concern myself.

At the beginning of February, 1884, business took me to Zululand; it had to do with a deal in cattle and blankets. As I was returning toward the Tugela who should I meet but friend Goza, he who had escorted me from the Black Kloof to Ulundi before the outbreak of war, and who afterward escorted me and that unutterable nuisance, Kaatje, out of the country.

At first I thought that we came together by accident, or perhaps that he had journeyed a little way to thank me for the blankets which I had sent to him, remembering my ancient promise, but afterward I changed my opinion on this point.

Well, we talked over many things, the war, the disasters that had befallen Zululand, and so forth. Especially did we talk of that night in the Valley of Bones and the things we had seen there side by side.

I asked him if the people still believed in the Inkosazana-y-Zulu who then appeared in the moonlight on the rock. He answered that some did and some did not. For his part, he added, looking at me fixedly, he did not, since it was rumored that Zikali had dressed up a white woman to play the part of the spirit. Yet he could not be sure of the matter, since it was also said that when some of Cetewayo's people went to kill this white woman in the Black Kloof, Nomkubulwana, the Princess of Heaven herself, rose before them and frightened them away.

I remarked that this was very strange, and then quite casually asked him whom Zikali had dressed up to play the part of the dead Mameena upon that same occasion, since this was a point upon which I always thirsted for definite intelligence.

He stared at me and replied that I ought to be able to answer my own question, since I had been much nearer to her who looked like Mameena than any one else, so near indeed that all present thought they saw her kiss me, as it was well known she had liked to do while still alive. I replied indignantly that they thought wrong and repeated my question. Then he answered straight out:

"Oh! Macumazahn, we Zulus believe that what we saw on that night was not Nombé or another dressed up, but the spirit of the witch Mameena itself. We believe it because we could see the light of Zikali's fire through her, not always, but sometimes; also because all that she said has come true though everything is not yet finished."

I could get no more out of him about the matter, for when I tried to speak of it again, he turned the subject, telling me of his wonderful escapes during the war. Presently he rose to go and said casually:

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"Surely I grow old in these times of trouble, Macumazahn, for thoughts slip through my head like water through the fingers. Almost I had forgotten what I wished to say to you. The other day I met the Opener of Roads. He told me that you were in Zululand and that I should meet you—he did not say where, only that when I did meet you, I was to give you a message. This was the message—that when on your way to Natal you came to the kraal, Jazi, you would find him there; also another whom you used to know, and must be sure not to go away without seeing him, since that was about to happen in which you had your part."

"Zikali!" I exclaimed. "I have heard nothing of him since the war. I thought that by now he was certainly dead."

"Oh, no, Macumazahn, he is certainly not dead, but just the same as ever. Indeed it is believed that he and no other has kept all this broth of trouble on the boil, some say for Cetewayo's sake, and some say because he wishes to destroy Cetewayo. But what do I know of such matters who only desire to live in peace under whatever chief the English queen sends to us, as she has a right do do having conquered us in war? When you meet the Opener of Roads at the kraal Jazi, ask him, Macumazahn."

"Where the devil is the kraal Jazi?" I inquired with irritation. "I never heard of such a place."

"Nor did I; therefore I can not tell you, Macumazahn. For aught I can say it may be down beneath where dead men go. But wherever it may be, there certainly you will meet the Opener of Roads. Now farewell, Macumazahn. If it should chance that we never look into each other's eyes again, I am sure you will think of me sometimes, as I shall of you, and of all that we have seen together, especially on that night in the Vale of Bones when the ghost of the witch Mameena prophesied to us and kissed you before us all. She must have been very beautiful, Macumazahn, as indeed I have heard from those who remember her and I don't wonder that you loved her so much. Still for my part I had rather be kissed by a living woman than by one who is dead, though doubtless it is best to be kissed by none at all. Again, farewell, and be sure to tell the Opener of Roads that I gave you his message, lest he should lay some evil charm upon me, who have seen enough evil of late."

Thus talking, Goza departed. I never saw him again, and do not know if he is dead or alive. Well, he was a kindly old fellow, if no hero.

I had almost forgotten the incident of this meeting when a while later I found myself in the neighborhood of the beautiful but semi-tropical place called Eshowe, which since those days has become the official home of the British Resident in Zululand. Indeed, although the house was not then finished, if it had been begun, Sir Melmoth Osborn already had an office there. I wished to see him in order to give him some rather important information, but when I reached a kraal of about fifty huts some five hundred yards from the site of the present residency, my wagon stuck fast in some broggy ground.

While I was trying to get it out a quiet-faced Zulu, whose name, I remember, was Umnikwa, informed me that Mali-mati, that is Sir Melmoth Osborn's native name, was somewhere at a little distance from Eshowe, too far away for me to get to him that night. I answered, very well, I would sleep where I was, and asked the name of the kraal.

He replied, Jazi, at which I started, but only said that it was a strange name, seeing that it meant "Finished," or "Finished with joy." Umnikwa answered, yes, but that it had been so called because the chief Umfokaki, or the stranger, who married a sister of the king, was killed at this kraal by his brother, Gundane, or the Bat.

I remarked that it was an ill-omened kind of name, to which the man replied, yes, and likely to become more so, since the King Cetewayo who had been sheltering there "beneath the armpit" of Mali-mati, the white lord, for some months, lay in it dying. I asked him of what he was dying, and he replied that he did not know, but that doubtless the father of the witch-doctor named Opener of Roads, would be able to tell me, as he was attending on Cetewayo.

"He has sent me to bid you to come at once, O Macumazahn," he added casually, "having had news that you were arriving here."

Showing no surprise, I answered that I would come, although goodness knows I was surprised enough, and leaving my servants to get my wagon out of the bog, I walked

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into the kraal with the messenger. He took me to a large hut placed within a fence about the gate of which some women were gathered, who all looked very anxious and disturbed. Among them I saw Dabuko the king's brother, whom I knew slightly. He greeted me and told me that Cetewayo was at the point of death within the hut, but like Umnika, professed ignorance of the cause of his illness.

FOR a long while, over an hour I should think, I sat there outside the hut, or walked to and fro. Until darkness came I could occupy myself with contemplating the scenery of the encircling hills, which is among the most beautiful in Zululand, with its swelling contours and rich coloring. But after it had set in only my thoughts remained, and these I found depressing.

At length I made up my mind that I would go away, for after all what had I to do with this business of the death of Cetewayo, if in truth he was dying? I wished to see no more of Cetewayo of whom all my recollections were terrific or sorrowful.

I rose to depart, when suddenly a woman emerged from the hut. I could not see who she was or even what she was like, because of the gloom; also for the reason that she had the corner of her blanket thrown over her face as though she wished to keep it hidden. For a moment she stopped opposite to me and said—

"The king who is sick desires to see you, Macumazahn."

Then she pointed to the door-hole of the hut and vanished, shutting the gate of the fence behind her. Curiosity overcame me and I crawled into the hut, pushing aside the door-board in order to do so and setting it up again when I was through.

Inside burned a single candle fixed in the neck of a bottle, faintly illuminating that big and gloomy place. By its feeble light I saw a low bedstead on the left of the entrance and lying on it a man half covered by a blanket in whom I recognized Cetewayo. His face was shrunken and distorted with pain, and his great bulk seemed less, but still without doubt it was Cetewayo.

"Greeting, Macumazahn," he said feebly, "you find me in evil case, but I heard that you were here and thought that I should like to see you before I die, because I know that you are honest and will report my words faithfully. I wish you to tell the white men that my heart never really was against them; they have always been the friends of my heart, but others forced me down a road I did not wish to travel, of which now I have come to the end."

"What is the matter with you, King?" I asked.

"I do not know, Macumazahn, but I have been sick for some days. The Opener of Roads who came to doctor me, because my wives believed those white medicine-men wished me dead, says that I have been poisoned and must die. If you had been here at first you might perhaps have given me some medicine. But now it is too late," he added with a groan.

"Who, then, poisoned you, King?"

"I can not tell you, Macumazahn. Perhaps my enemies, perhaps my brothers, perhaps my wives. All wish to have done with me, and the Great One, who is no longer wanted, is soon dead. Be thankful, Macumazahn, that you never were a king, for sad is the lot of kings."

"Where, then, is the Opener of Roads?" I asked.

"He was here a little while ago. Perhaps he has gone out to take the King's head" (i. e., to announce his death) "to Maltimati and the white men," he answered in a faint voice.

Just then I heard a shuffling noise proceeding from that part of the hut where the shadow was deepest, and, looking, saw an emaciated arm projected into the circle of the light. It was followed by another arm, then by a vast head covered with long white hair that trailed upon the ground, then by a big, misshapen body, so wasted that it looked like a skeleton covered with corrugated black skin.

Slowly, like a chameleon climbing a bough, the thing crept forward, and I knew it for Zikali. He reached the side of the bed and squatted down in his toad-like fashion, then, again like a chameleon, without moving his head, turned his deep and glowing eyes towards me.

"Hail, Macumazahn," he said in his low voice. "Did I not promise you long ago that you should be with me at the last, and are you not with me and another?"

"It seems so, Zikali," I answered. "But why do you not send for the white doctors to cure the king?"

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"All the doctors, white and black, in the whole world can not cure him, Macumazahn. The spirits call him and he dies. At his call I came fast and far, but even I can not cure him, although because of him I myself must die."

"Why?" I asked.

"Look at me, Macumazahn, and say if I am one who should travel. Well, all come to their end at last, even the Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born."

Cetewayo lifted his head and looked at him, then said heavily:

"Perchance it would have been better for our House if that end had been sooner. Now that I lie dying many sayings concerning you come into my mind that I had forgotten. Moreover, Opener of Roads, I never sent for you, whoever may have done so, and it was not until after you came here that the great pain seized me. How did it happen," he went on with gathering force, "that the white men caught me in the secret place where you told me I should hide? Who pointed out that hidden hole to the white men? But what does it matter now?"

"Nothing at all, O Son of Panda," answered Zikali, "even less than it matters how I escaped the spear-head hidden in your robe, yonder in my hut in the Black Kloof where, had it not been for a certain spirit that stood between you and me, you would have murdered me. Tell me, Son of Panda, during these last three days have you thought at all of your brother Umbelazi, and of certain other brethren of yours whom you killed at the battle of the Tugela, when the white man here led the charge of the Amawombe against your regiments and ate up three of them?"

Cetewayo groaned but said nothing. I think he had become too faint to speak.

"Listen, Son of Panda," went on Zikali. "Many, many years ago, before Senzangacona, your grandfather, saw the light—who knows how long before—a man was born of high blood in the Dwandwe tribe, which man was a dwarf. Chaka the Black One conquered the Dwandwe, but this man of high blood was spared because he was a dwarf, an abortion, to whom Chaka gave the name of the 'Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born,' keeping him about him to be a mock in times of peace and safety, and because he was wise and learned in magic, to be a counselor in times of trouble. Moreover, Chaka killed this man's wives and children for his sport, save one whom he kept to be his 'sister.'

"Therefore for the sake of his people and his butchered wives and children, this wizard swore an oath of vengeance against Chaka and all his House. Working beneath the ground like a rat, he undermined the throne of Chaka and brought him to his death by the spears of his brethren and of Mopo his servant, whom Chaka had wronged. Still working in the dark like a rat, he caused Dingaan, who stabbed Chaka, to murder Retief and his people, and thus called down upon his head the vengeance of the whites, and afterwards brought Dingaan to his death.

"Then, Panda, your father, arose, and his life this Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born spared because once Panda had done him a kindness. Only through the witch Mameena he brought sorrow on him, causing war to arise between his children one of whom was named Cetewayo.

"Then this Cetewayo ruled, first with his father Panda and afterwards in his place, and trouble arose between him and the English. Son of Panda, you will remember that this Cetewayo was in doubt whether to fight the English and demanded a sign of the Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born. He gave the sign, causing the Inkosazana-y-Zulu, the Princess of Heaven, to appear before him and thereby lifting the spear of War.

"Son of Panda, you know how that war went, how this Cetewayo was defeated and came to the Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born like a hunted hyena, to learn of a hole where he might hide. You know, too, how he strove to murder the poor old doctor who showed him such a hole; how he was taken prisoner and sent across the water and afterwards set up again in the land that had learned to hate him, to bring its children to death by thousands. And you know how at last he took refuge beneath the wing of the white man, here in the kraal Jazi, and lived, spat upon, an outcast, until at length he fell sick, as such men are apt to do, and that Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born was sent for to doctor him. And you know also how he lies dying, within him an agony as though he had swallowed a red hot spear, and before him a great blackness peopled by the ghosts of those whom he has slain, and of his forefathers whose House he has pulled down and burned."

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He ceased, and, thrusting his hideous head to within an inch or two of that of the dying man, he glowered at him with his fierce and fiery eyes. Then he began to whisper into the king's ear, who quivered at his words, as the victim quivers beneath the torturer's hooks.

AT THAT moment the end of the candle fell into the bottle which was of clear white glass, and there burned for a little while dully before it went out. Never shall I forget the scene illumined by its blue and ghastly light. The dying man lying on the low couch rocking his head to and fro; the wizard bending over him like some grey vampire bat, sucking the life-blood from his helpless throat. The terror in the eyes of the one, the insatiable hate in the eyes of the other. Oh, it was awful!

"Macumazahn," gasped Cetewayo in a rattling whisper, "help me, Macumazahn. I say that I am poisoned by this Zikali who hates me. Oh! Drive away the ghosts! Drive them away!"

I looked at him and at his tormentor squatted by him like a mocking fiend, and as I looked the candle went out. Then my nerve broke, the cold sweat poured from my face and I fled from the hut as a man might from a scene in hell, followed by the low mocking laugh of Zikali.

Outside the women and others were gathered in the gloom. I told them to go to the king, who was dying, and blundered up the slope to search for some white man. No one was to be found, but a Kaffir messenger by the office told me that Mali-mati was still away and had been sent for. So I returned to my wagon and lay down in it exhausted, for what more could I do?

It was a rough night. Thunder muttered and rain fell in driving gusts. I dozed off, only to be awakened by a sound of wailing. Then I knew that the king was dead, for this was the *Isililo*, the cry of mourning. I wondered whether the murderers—for that he was poisoned I had no doubt—were among those who wailed.

Toward dawn the storm rolled off and the night grew serene and clear, for a waning moon was shining in the sky. The heat of that stifling place oppressed me; my blood seemed to be afire.

I knew that there was a stream in a gorge about half a mile away, for it had been pointed out to me. I longed for a swim in cool water, who, to tell truth, had found none for some days, and bethought me that I would bathe in this stream before I trekked from that hateful spot, for to me it had become hateful.

Calling my driver, who was awake and talking with the voorloopers, for they knew what was passing at the kraal and were alarmed, I told them to get the oxen ready to start as I would be back presently. Then I set off for the stream, and, after a longish walk, scrambled down a steep ravine to its banks, following a path made by Kaffir women going to draw water.

Arrived there at last I found that it was in flood and rising rapidly, at least so I judged from the sound, for in that deep, tree-hung place the light was too faint to allow me to see anything. So I sat down waiting for the dawn and wishing that I had not come because of the mosquitoes.

At length it broke and the mists lifted, showing that the spot was one of great beauty. Opposite to me was a waterfall twenty or thirty feet high, over which the torrent rushed into a black pool below. Everywhere grew tall ferns and beyond these graceful trees, from whose leaves hung raindrops.

In the center of the stream on the edge of the fall was a rock not a dozen feet away from me, round which the water foamed. Something was squatted on this rock, at first I could not see what because of the mist but thought that it was a gray-headed baboon, or some other animal, and regretted that I had not brought a gun with me.

Presently I became aware that it must be a man, for, in a chanting voice, it began to speak or pray in Zulu, and hidden behind a flowering bush I could hear the words. They were to this effect:

"O my spirit, here where thou foundest me when I was young, hundreds of years ago" (he said hundreds, but I suppose he meant tens), "I come back to thee. In this pool I dived and beneath the waters found thee, my snake, and thou didst wind thyself about my body and about my heart" (here I understood that the speaker was alluding to his initiation as a witch-doctor which generally includes or used to include, the finding of a snake in a river that coils itself about the neophyte). "About my body and in my heart thou hast dwelt from that sun to this, giving me wisdom and

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good and evil counsel, and that which thou hast counselled, I have done. Now I return thee whence thou camest, there to await me in the new brith.

"O Spirits of my fathers, toiling through many years I have avenged you on the House of Senzangacona, and never again will there be a king of the Zulus, for the last of them lies dead by my hand. O my murdered wives and my children, I have offered up to you a mighty sacrifice, a sacrifice of thousands upon thousands.

"O Umkulu-kulu, Great One of the heavens, who sendest me to earth, I have done thy work upon the earth and bring back to thee thy harvest of the seed that thou hast sown, a blood-red harvest, O Umkulu-kulu. Be still, be still, my snake, the sun arises, and soon, soon shalt thou rest in the water that wast thine from the beginning of the world!"

The voice ceased, and presently a spear of light piercing the mists, lit upon the speaker. It was Zikali, and about him was wound a great yellow-bellied snake, of which the black head with flickering tongue waved above his head and seemed from time to time to lick him on the brow. (I suppose it had come to him from the water, for its skin glittered as if with wet.)

He stood up on tottering feet, staring at the red eye of the rising sun, then crying "Finished, finished with joy!" with a loud and dreadful laughter, he plunged into the foaming pool beneath.

Such was the end of Zikali the Wizard, Opener of Roads, the Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born, and such the vengeance that he worked upon the great House of Senzangacona, bringing it to naught and with it the nation of the Zulus.

THE END

LITTLE MARIE

by HENRY OYEN

Author of "The Snow-Burner," "Gaston Olaf," etc.

MR. PETE BOILEAU, timber cruiser for the Superior Log Company, gave a last fond pat to the furiously red tie with which he had been wrestling, and looked with considerable self-approval in the mirror.

"How d'you like it, Spike?" he asked of his chum. "Don't it fill your old heart with jealousy to see me when I'm all dressed up?"

Mr. Spike Carlson, walking boss for the company, looked up from the sofa with a yawn. The company drive had gone home behind the booms of Shantytown the day before, and Pete and Spike were luxuriating in the comforts of the Pine Tree House before going back into the bush. On such occasions it was Carlson's great joy to remove his calked shoes, drape his six-feet-four

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frame over a sofa or bed and steep his mind in the uplifting effusions of Bertha M. Clay. While his men, and even the other bosses, indulged themselves in the justly celebrated lumber-jack diversion of raising Gehenna and putting a jack under it, Mr. Carlson, in his socks, pursued the noble pleasures of sentimental literature. The more sentimental it was the better he liked it, and when the noble hero kissed the pale, beautiful heroine in the moonlight and the last chapter, Mr. Carlson was known to wave his sock-clad feet on high in sheer ecstasy of sentimental uplift.

Mr. Pete Boileau's in-town diversions were of a different sort. The first day Mr. Boileau invariably devoted to the barber, the haberdasher, the tailor. His tastes ran considerably to oiled hair and red ties and his dream of heaven was a place where a man could be dressed up every day and go to a dance every night.

He was about five feet nine, weighed two hundred pounds, and fancied he was light on his feet and slender. He was just at present the happiest sober man in Shantytown; he was arrayed as pleased his most colorful fancy, and he was going to a dance.

Carlson, on second glance, raised himself to his elbow. He regarded Mr. Boileau thoughtfully, shaking his head.

"Pete," said he slowly, " a man couldn't hit you anywhere with a bucket of tar without improving your looks."

Having delivered himself thus, Mr. Carlson resumed his absorption of "Wife In Name Only."

Boileau received the verdict with a grin that testified to the firmness of the friendship between them. As he had saved Carlson's life once, and Carlson had saved Pete's job twice, they had a perfect right to express such opinions concerning one another. Pete whistled a little. Then he said—

"I'll bet Little Marie won't say that."

Carlson looked up again.

"Marie—who?" he growled.

"Oh, nobody you know. Just a friend of mine; young lady I met this afternoon."

"Live in Shantytown?"

Carlson knew every girl or woman in Shantytown—as he knew every man, boy and dog—and so far he had not seen in any of them the subtle qualities which made his literary heroines so alluring.

"No," said Pete. "Anyhow I never saw her here before. 'Call me Marie,' says she. In the post-office it was. So I'm going to meet her at the dance."

Carlson looked his friend over carefully, and, seeing that he was telling the absolute truth, said—

"You're a darn liar."

"All right." Pete prepared to depart. "Mebbe I am a liar, and then mebbe again if you should happen to wander down to the dance floor 'bout an hour from now you'd see me, the Pride o' The River, dancing with the most beautiful young lady that ever came up above the Grand Père rapids. Pretty? Why, say, Spike, you remember the minister's daughter at Little Ax who used to sing in the choir? Well, she was a lot like this girl, quite a lot."

At which Pete skilfully dodged one of Carlson's swiftly flung shoes and went out, leaving the flinger along with his studies.

Carlson remembered well the minister's daughter at Little Ax. Because of her he had put on a stiff shirt and collar, because of her he had gone to church. And then she had gone away, her father being called elsewhere, and Carlson was left with an emptyish feeling about his big, sound heart, and the firm unshakable conviction that his life henceforth was to be a hollow and empty mockery, and that to the end of his days he would know the bitterness of a thwarted love.

It had lasted all of three days. Then, somehow, he had come back to normal; but he remembered that minister's daughter very well, indeed. In fact, when Pete spoke of her there came before Carlson's eyes a vision of a small face and dark eyes and a mouth that smiled, though it strove to be severe. Mr. Carlson's imagination was quick from contact with master minds of literature.

Was it possible that there was another being in the world who was a lot like her, as Pete had proclaimed? Hardly. Pete was a liar. He was a liar by the clock. Carlson turned back to his book.

"She was petite, yet of charming figure," he read. "Her countenance was small, and her dark, luminous eyes had in them the suggestion of limpid lakes by night. Though she maintained all the dignity that was due to her position, at times she smiled readily, especially when Montmorency came in sight."

Carlson tossed the book to one side and reached for his corn-cob pipe.

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"Don't think so much of that volume," he confided to himself through clouds of tobacco smoke.

He picked up another book and plunged eagerly into the opening chapters.

"On a morning in June a graceful, dark-eyed girl came out of the old, vine-covered church where her father was pastor. Her name was Marie——"

Carlson sprang up. He was a man of sudden action when moved, and the book went over his shoulder, and great smoke-puffs swirled about him as he paced the little room. Finally, he stopped before the small wall mirror where Boileau had but a short time before regarded himself with complacency.

"Suppose, now," said Carlson, gesticulating with the corn-cob at the figure in the mirror, "just suppose for argument's sake that there was going to be a girl like that down at the shindig. Wouldn't it be a darn shame to waste her on a clown like that poor idiot Pete Boileau?"

"Not," he continued, tamping down his tobacco, "not that Pete hain't got his good points, 'cause he has. He does know sawlogs when he sees 'em in the bush. But he hain't got any right to expect girls like that to be wasted on him when there's sensible men loose in the timber. I'll just step down to that shindig and see 'f by any chance this girl is like that minister's daughter over at Little Ax."

HAVING arrived at this decision Mr. Carlson hastened to put himself in fit array to attend the ball. His taste ran to sober colors; and no woman was to be blamed for looking twice at his tall, straight figure, and his thin, Indian-like profile, especially if she were a woman with a mischievious twinkle in her eyes.

Which Little Marie was. For Carlson found that there was a Little Marie. He found her alone on the dance-floor, Pete Boileau having stepped out to bring her a glass of lemonade. To Carlson's unsophisticated eyes the petite Marie was all that the minister's daughter had been, aye, and much more. For she was easy to approach. So when Pete returned with the lemonade he found Marie dancing with his friend and, to all visible signs, enjoying it immensely.

In the queer combination-emotion of amazement and anger which tightens men's throats at such times, Pete unthinkingly drank off the lemonade which he had brought for his erstwhile partner. When the dance ended and Marie, accompanied by Carlson, came strolling up in search of her refreshment, there stood Pete Boileau, holding out an empty glass and presenting anything but a dignified figure.

"Well, Mr. Boileau! Where's my lemonade?" said Marie laughingly.

It was an unfortunate remark. It called general attention to Pete's position. A young girl giggled. Boileau's dark face flushed, but he controlled himself.

"Excuse me; I forgot. I'll go for some more."

"No, no. I'll go," said Carlson. "If you don't mind, Pete."

The woman sensed the tense situation and rose to it mischievously. She was innocent, but mischievous.

"Oh, where is the stand where you get lemonade?" she asked. "I think it would be fun to go out for some."

Carlson had started toward the refreshment stand. She caught his arm and went with him. Pete hurled the lemonade glass into the black night and rushed off to drink something not made of lemons. When Marie returned to the dance-floor she found him waiting for her with angry words on his lips and black frowns upon his brow. But she smiled at him and talked at him, and presently the frowns vanished; he smiled, and they joined in the waltz that had begun.

Spike Carlson stood back and looked on. Each time the dancers swept past him Marie bestowed upon him a look. Had Carlson been more knowing in the matter of women he would have seen that the look was nothing more nor less than the play of a mischievous woman—innocent, but mischievous. He would have seen that she bestowed the same look with perfect facility upon Boileau, or any other man with whom she happened to be speaking. He would have seen what was the truth: that Marie was a very self-possessed young woman, not so young as her girlish face, manner and figure indicated, who was amusing herself for the time being with two big woodsmen, old enough to take care of themselves, as her victims for the evening.

But Carlson was just in off the river, and Marie certainly did to some degree resemble the minister's daughter at Little Ax who had left such an impression upon his heart. He turned to the nearest town man,

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"Who is she—the girl who's dancing with old Pete?"

"Sister of the postmaster's wife," replied the man. He should have added a certain item of information to this brief statement; but he didn't, so Carlson got a wrong impression. "She's visiting with 'em for the the Summer."

And just then Marie flashed out another of her mischievous glances.

Carlson breathed sharply, strolled away to the nearest bar and bought a cigar. Pete Boileau came there also, as soon as the waltz ended. Pete was red in the face, and his little black eyes were snapping with triumph

"H'lo, Pete," greeted Carlson, grudgingly. "Have something with me."

Boileau stared his old friend steadily in the eye. He went up to the bar and ordered liquor. He drank. He paid for his drink and walked out without a word.

"Oh," said Carlson quietly, "so that's it, is it? All right."

Very quietly he returned to the dance-floor. Marie looked up and smiled, in spite of the presence of Boileau.

"May I have this dance?" said Carlson.

"You dance perfectly," said she, rising. And she laughed at both of them as she moved out on the floor.

Had they not been such true friends the two men would not have hated each other so promptly that evening. Mr. Pete Boileau said to himself, as he drank another whisky—

"He pretends to be my friend, and here he's doing his level best to steal my girl."

Mr. Carlson said to himself:

"Pete's a fine sneak! He sees that I could get along well with the girl and he wants to take her away. He'll pay for that."

Throughout the evening, as he fell more and more beneath the spell of Marie's eyes, so did Pete. As their regard for Marie rose so rose their hatred of one another. At eleven, when Marie suddenly disappeared with a bevy of town girls, the two old friends were glowering savagely at each other and ready to fight.

They met in the barroom and they were most wofully polite.

"I'll ask you again to have something with me, Mr. Boileau," said Carlson coldly.

"And I'll tell you to go to —— again, you cheap high-banker," retorted Boileau earnestly.

Their coats hit the floor at the same time. They swung simultaneously and with equal force behind their blows, but each knowing the other's fighting tactics by heart, the blows slipped off ready guards, and they locked in a clinch. The barroom filled with an eager crowd. Pete Boileau and Spike Carlson were fighting!

The crowd was disappointed. The two combatants hung in the clinch for a few minutes, and then some degree of reason entered their inflamed brains. They separated and stood glaring at one another.

"I'll see you later about this, Pete," said Carlson. "I won't give these guys the satisfaction of seeing me beat an old chum to a frazzle."

"I'll meet you any place you say," bellowed Pete. "Name the spot, you hound!"

"Hound," was too much. Carlson said—

"You won't dare to be out at Camp One at daylight."

"I'll be waiting for you!" swore Pete. "I'll start now, and I'll be waiting there to kick your head off at daylight."

He sprang out of the barroom and plunged up the river road. Each knew that the other would keep his word.

Carlson watched him go.

"That's a poor way to pull off a fight," sneered a man. "Out where nobody can see it."

Half an hour later that man opened weary eyes and asked—"What hit me?"

"Hit you?" was the response. "Nothing hit you. Spike just slapped you 'longside the jaw."

By that time Carlson, too, was traveling the river road, following the rushing Boileau, equally eager for the unwitnessed fray they had pledged themselves to at daybreak. Had they been in possession of their normal senses that night neither would have gone far from town, for there was something abroad in the hot, dry woods that night which no woodsman could have failed to notice. But the fury of these two made them oblivious to everything but the ground underfoot. They rushed along with lowered heads, a mile apart, and saw nothing, heard nothing, smelled nothing, and thought only of the fight to come.

THE first that Pete Boileau noticed anything wrong was when in the first graying of daylight he came bursting like a maddened buck out of the timber into the clearing of Camp One.

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Camp One should have been deserted at that time of the year, the men all being in town. It wasn't deserted. There were a couple of teams in the clearing; there were men, women and children. The women were scantily clad, as if they had come from their homes in a hurry; the children were crying; the horses lathered and trembling; and the men stood looking fearfully toward the north, ready to drive on down the river.

Pete Boileau was angered at this interruption of his plans. He recognized the men as settlers who had taken up homesteads farther up the river, and he possessed the timber cruiser's antipathy for farmers.

If a gentleman couldn't go out in the bush to fight a friend without running into a crowd of stump-pullers it was high time something was done!

"What you doing here?" exploded Pete angrily. "Why don't you stay at home where you belong?"

There was a silence. Then one man said—

"We hain't got no homes now."

"Serves you right. Whoa, there! What's the matter with that horse?"

"He smells the smoke," said the animal's owner.

Pete stood staring at the speaker for several seconds.

"Smoke?" he said slowly.

"Smoke," said the man.

Pete slowly turned his face to the north and drew in a long breath.

"Whee-oh!" he whistled when his nostrils had told him what there was to know. "Where's she burning?"

"She's going east; spreading this way too. It hit the river 'bout an hour ago."

Pete whistled again.

"Well, you all got away with your lives; that's something," he consoled.

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"That's just the —— of it," said a man. "We didn't all get away."

"What?"

"That fellow from Shantytown who was fishing up at Griff's mill—he didn't get out."

"Oh, well," said Pete, "one town man more or less ain't going to be missed."

"He had his six-year-old kid with him."

"The fool!"

"They went up there day before yestiddy. They was coming back this ev'nin', but the fire's all around 'em now and they'll never get back at all."

"The fool!" repeated Pete Boileau. "Mebbe he got out another way."

"Couldn't. The Big Swamp's a-burnin' north and east of him, and the timber's afire to the west and south. He'll have to stay at the mill. We didn't have no chance to try to get him; we had to get away with our own."

"Does he know the country at all?"

"No. He's just visiting at Shantytown. The postamster come up with him; he was coming after him this ev'nin'. No; that man and his kid are sewed up in the fire, that's a cinch."

Pete thought quickly.

"There's an old spur running from the Soo Junction to the mill. Mebbe they'll send an engine over and get 'em."

"They don't know 'bout 'em over't the Junction."

Pete thought quickly again.

"All right," he said, having arrived at a decision. "I'll go over to the Junction and tell 'em. They can get an engine; and it'll take an engine to get to Griff's mill and back now."

"It's all fire over that way toward the Junction."

"I know, but there'll be a way of getting through. Now, listen; there's a man I had a date with here at daylight, and you tell him why I ain't here. Tell him to wait for me right here. Tell him I'll be back as soon as I can, and that if I get back I'll want to see him just the same as if there was no fire."

"It's all fire, I tell you, over that way!"

"Tell him that!" roared Boileau; and he started on the run to cover the five miles to the Soo Junction.

Carlson came into Camp One's clearing about fifteen minutes after Boileau's departure.

"Where," said he promptly, "is that skunk, Pete Boileau?"

When he had been told in a general way Pete's location at that moment, and the why of it, he exploded a mass of strong, sincere words.

"And who," said he, "is the mutt that's up there at the mill?"

They told him as much as they knew.

"Friend of the postmaster's, eh?" Carlson's eyes grew small. "Ah, ha! That's what Pete's after; thinks he may get a stand-in at the postmaster's house out of it. Might know there was something in it or

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that shunk wouldn't take a chance saving life."

This, being strictly untrue, testified to the awful degree of Carlson's anger.

"You say he's going to the Junction to get an engine? Hah!" Spike apparently recalled something which pleased him very much. "A Soo engine to go to Griff's mill!" He laughed harshly.

"He'll never make it, anyhow," said one of the settlers, pointing in the direction of the Junction. "Look at that."

Carlson looked. Daylight was coming rapidly now, and the pall of night was lifting on a terrifying spectacle. The whole world to the northwest, the direction of the Junction, seemed to be a world of smoke. It was as if the earth and sky were burning together.

"No man can get through that," said a settler.

"No," snapped Carlson. "But if he does, and he comes back here, you tell him I'll be back here; tell him to wait for me; I'll want to see him just the same's if there wasn't no fire."

And he, too, plunged away into the inferno of smoke toward the Junction, on his rival's trail.

The rival in the meantime was having a hard time of it. He had, immediately upon leaving Camp One, struck out for a bare, burned-over ridge running generally in a northwesterly direction, where his experience told him the fire, failing of fuel, would not be raging. He found the ridge, but it was not as bare as he had hoped. The former fire which had passed over it had been stilled by a mighty rain ere its work had been well done, consequently the ridge was strewn with charred remnants of the forest that had covered it, not food for a roaring forest fire, it is true, but sufficient for a blaze that made Pete Boileau's way hot and full of danger.

But for a tiny spring spurting out of one side of the ridge he never would have won through. He found the spring at the moment when the heat was mastering him. Its cold water saved him. He soaked himself in it. He stripped off his blue flannel shirt and wound it, soaked, about his head, cutting holes for his eyes.

Filling his lungs with air he leaped down the far side of the ridge toward the wall of flame, broke through, and dived into the little lake at the foot of the hill. There was fire all about the lake; the tamaracks were falling like glorious roaring torches into the water, which was beginning to steam, but Pete knew that a creek ran out of the farther end and that the creek ran into the Junction River, a mile above that little town.

He had been in many fires, had Pete Boileau, and he began to swim across the lake, under water as much as possible, and searching the blazing shore for the opening of the creek.

Spike Carlson, being of a more deliberate breed, paused when he came to the foot of the burned-over ridge.

"That's a trap, that hog-back," said he to himself. "It's like the ridge-pole of a house with the walls afire, I'll go around."

He started to make a detour, but presently he came back to the spot where Pete's clear trail led up the ridge. Carlson went back to a swamp he had crossed, duplicated Pete's feat of making a water-soaked headpiece out of his flannel shirt, and went up the ridge on the run.

IT WAS full-blown day when Pete Boileau came staggering up from the Junction River and stood looking stupidly at the tiny station, the boarding-house, and the saloon, which composed the town from which the river took his name. He was not a pretty thing to the eye. His carefully oiled black hair was gone, and in its place were a mass of tiny, frizzly-brown curls, testimony of how the heat had tested Pete's skull. Of such clothes as remained to him there fell flakes each time he moved violently; they were baked till they all but fell apart. He moved toward the group of men cowering on the station platform, breathing through his mouth.

"Wake up, you high-bankers!" he croaked hoarsely. "There's a man and a kid caught in Griff's mill. Get an engine; run up and bring 'em out."

And then from behind him came the ghost of a cracked laugh. Pete turned. Spike Carlson was dragging himself out of the river, and his plight was even as Boileau's.

"An engine, you thick-head!" sneered Spike triumphantly. "D'you know the diff'rence between standard and narrow gage? Get some brains! There hasn't been an engine on the spur since the mill quit sawing, you fool."

Boileau did not comprehend at first. He merely glared at Carlson. When he understood, he indicated it merely by intensifying

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the enmity in his glare. He reached into his scorched hip-pocket for his plug and took a full chew. Then he looked down the clean, well-kept right-of-way of the main line, with its gleaming rails, standard gage, and from that to the rusty steel, with grass and weeds between them, of the abandoned narrow-gage logging-spur.

Then he spat and cursed Spike Carlson as few white men have been cursed by another. Carlson merely sneered.

"Keep it up," he croaked. "It all counts up in the beating I'm going to give you when I get time."

"Time! you sneak! Now's your time."

"When I get time," repeated Carlson.

He was walking unsteadily across the main line toward the old tool-shed on the logging-spur.

"Is it still in there, d'you know, you fellows?" he asked hoarsely.

"Is what in there?" asked a man on the station platform.

"The old hand-car we used to have?"

"Sure."

Carlson picked up a cast-off coupling-pin and smashed the lock on the tool-house door. He flung the door open, and presently out upon the rusted, grass-grown rails he pushed an old creaking hand-car.

He worked the groaning handles up and down thrice to make sure that the car was in running order.

"Get me some grease," he commanded.

As he soaped the working parts of the machine with grease he said—

"Now, get me a lot of water."

The water he used in drenching the old car until its tinder-dry wooden platform was soaked through. By this time the men at the station understood what he was planning to do, and without being bid they produced a pair of blankets soaked through and a large can full of cold water. Carlson stepped upon the car and grasped the handle.

"I'm a good man on a hand-car," said a squat railroader, stepping forth. "I'll go with you."

Pete Boileau's thick arm swept him back to his fellows with one thrust, and Pete leaped upon the car and caught the handle and stood face to face with Carlson.

"All right," sneered the latter. "When you play out I'll dump you and go on alone."

"And when you play out," cackled Pete, "I'll pump you back here and kick the living —— out of you."

Carlson shoved down his handle; the car moved. Boileau thrust his handle down and the movement was accelerated.

"Good luck, boys!" cried the men about the station, and propelled by the straining muscles of the two rivals the little hand-car went leaping up the track, straight at the wall of smoke and flame that blotted out earth and sky, and which lay across the way to the man and child at Griff's mill.

A hand-car is a vehicle which profits from the enmity of the men operating. When Spike Carlson thrust his handle down vigorously Pete Boileau's handle flew up with a kick. Consequently there was nothing for Pete to do, being Spike's enemy and rival, save to thrust his own handle down with all the might in his huge shoulders. This sent the handle in Carlson's hands up with a jerk. The tall fellow smiled grimly and added an extra pound of vigor to his effort. Boileau responded in kind.

Stroke by stroke they worked their speed up until they were pumping the handles at the limit of their strength and agility. And the hand-car flew.

It was not smooth riding. The spur had been abandoned two years before, and spikes had pulled loose from the ties, joints had become shaky, wash-outs had created sudden depressions, and in one spot a rail was missing. And then there was the smoke. They began to feel its effects as soon as they entered the swamp three miles from the Junction and with their journey half done. It did not roll in clouds, it did not bellow upward; it merely hung there in the morning calm, a torture to eyes, throat and lungs, and a warning of what was coming farther up the line where the fire was raging.

The two mad riders coughed with equal continuity, their smoke-blackened faces were equally scarred with rivulets of smoke-wrung tears; and they pumped away and did not speak a word.

Pete Boileau rode with his back toward the fire, so his was possibly the most favorable position. He could not see what was ahead, and consequently he had nothing to worry about. He would stay at the handle until the car carried him into Hades before he would give that lanky hound pumping against him the satisfaction of seeing him turn around to look.

Carlson rode with his face turned up-track

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so he was forced to see. True, he weakened for a flash as they flew out upon the swamp, and ducked his head and closed his eyes to shut out the scene ahead; but it lasted only a second or two, and then he lifted his head and pumped with his reddened eyes looking the inferno squarely in the face. And he smiled.

His was the responsibility, for Pete had turned himself into a dogged, human machine who would keep on pumping blindly until the fire crisped him on the car. Carlson had to keep his mind alive, to provide the intelligence without which they never would get to the mill. At a spot half-way across the swamp, with the track ahead hidden in smoke, with the tamaracks on both sides crackling and falling, he held up his hand and croaked—

"Stop!"

They stopped on a bridge spanning a tiny creek.

"Look around," commanded Carlson.

Boileau obeyed. He did not shrink at what he saw.

"I knew it was there," he gasped. "What's the idea?"

"I thought maybe you'd want to turn back when you saw what we're up against."

"Oh, my Gawd!" croaked Boileau. "You dare give me that talk!"

"All right." Carlson leaped off the car. "If you're going to stick, here's where we soak up again."

They fell into the tepid water of the creek and soaked themselves. They soaked the car anew—it was tinder dry again by now—and they soaked the blankets. These latter they hung over themselves, dripping, not troubling to cut eye-holes. No need for them to see. They had seen, and they were going ahead in spite of it. Covered from crown to ankles with thick cloth, they mounted the car.

"Now—if we're men!" growled Carlson, and they shot into the fire.

The blankets served a triple purpose: they shut out the fiendish roaring from the pair's ears, they shut out the sight of the wicked tongues of flame that shot across the track from the burning brush on either side, and they saved the two men from being suffocated and burned before they had half won through.

Without seeing, without hearing, and without a falter, Carlson and Boileau shot their car over the shaky rails. They knew when they struck the fire-belt because of the fashion in which they began to steam beneath the blankets, because of the heat of the air which they managed to draw by gasps through the wet cloth.

They knew when they were at the worst of it, when the next second would spell life or death for both, by the manner in which their hearts throbbed, weary from the poor air that their lungs were working with, and by the roaring in their heads, a roaring as if the fire was within their skulls. And they knew when they had won through by the sudden drop of temperature to approximately a hundred and twenty degrees.

Carlson threw back his blanket. They were running past the great sawdust piles which marked the one-time location of Griff's mill, the mill itself having been removed two years before, and the sawdust was as yet barely touched by fire.

"There's a chance," he gasped. "They may be alive. Wake up, wake up, if you're still alive, and come a-running!"

Out of a tunnel which he had digged at the base of one of the piles came crawling a man with the beginning of madness in his popping eyes.

"Where's the kid?" demanded Carlson. "Get him. Get aboard. We've got to break records going back or we'll all be cooked."

The man looked down the track and cowered.

"I—I don't want to try it," he babbled, drawing back toward his hole. "We're all right in there. The sawdust is wet in there. We can chew it and keep our throats from burning up. I won't risk——"

Pete Boileau caught him by an ankle as he tried to crawl in and dragged him out whining. Spike Carlson, intruding his long body into the tunnel, reached out with his long arms until his hands fell upon a skinny arm.

"It's all right, sonny," said he soothingly. "You're all right. There."

The little fellow, the moment he was drawn into the daylight, sprang up, brushing the wet sawdust from his clothes.

"I wasn't scart a bit," he proclaimed. "Haw! I ain't scart o' th' dark any more, pa."

Boileau was passing around the can of drinking water.

"Drink," he commanded. "Fill up. Last stop for refreshments this side of the Junction—or *hell*."

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"There you go, you pup; talking that way before a kid," said Carlson.

"This pup'll tear your head off, don't you forget that."

The man was protesting weakly, but he was a child in the hands of these two men who had set their hands to a desperate task. They tied him to the floor of the car with their belts. They packed wet sawdust half a foot deep on the floor and laid the boy in it.

Then they covered him and his father with more wet sawdust, leaving plenty of holes for air. Their own blankets, which now were dry, they also wet down as well as might be with sawdust, and then with their mouths full of the wet stuff they climbed aboard and began the fight back.

The fire had risen to full pitch by now and, as they flew into the fire-belt, a cloud of flame seemed to roll down to meet them. It didn't quite meet them, but it sent them to their knees.

Boileau knew that he had fallen across his pump-handle, because he felt the handle pressing up against his chest as Carlson, too, fell forward. Then there was a black space, and then they were both conscious through a sense of falling, of splashing in water, of a sudden great coolness.

Then their senses cleared and they saw they were in the creek. The bridge had burned through in their absence, and they had plunged into the water in their blind flight.

They put the car wearily back on the track and started anew. They worked the handles like drunken men, thrusting, recovering, staggering, all but falling from the car. The man whom they were saving, his wits cleared by the rough bath, sensed their condition, and began to shout—

"Pump, pump, pump!"

Pump, pump, pump! Yes, he would have to pump, thought Carlson, or that pup Boileau would crow over him at the Junction. He didn't want to pump; he wanted to roll off the car and quit.

Pete was thinking the same thing.

"Pump, boys, pump!" commanded the boy's father. And the boy joined in with his treble, "Pump, boys, pump!"

And so they pumped. And when one fell on his handle the other laughed weakly at him till he struggled up and pumped again. And presently they sensed that the air was getting better, that it was not so fiendishly warm, and presently Carlson threw back his blanket and saw that they were out of the swamp, that they were going to get through.

Down at the Junction there was by this time gathered a crowd. There was more than a crowd, there was a wrecking train with a huge crane swinging a little narrow gage engine off a flat car onto the rails of the logging-spur. And there was a small woman who wept and raved and had to be held. And into this scene, with two half-dead men at the handles, and a man and boy as passengers, the hand-car came crawling.

It barely moved now, and as it came on no one ran to meet it. For it seemed a delusion, a nightmare. It wasn't possible that a hand-car could have got through the swamp. A locomotive might, but a hand-car!

And then suddenly the woman screamed and ran forward. She caught the hand-car and with her own hands brought it to a dead stop. She threw herself first on the man, then on the boy; then she had both of them in her arms together. And she babbled and laughed, and she pressed two heads to her woman's bosom, begging over and over again to hear that they were all right. For the men at the pump-handles she had not even a look.

But they looked at her. Drunken with smoke and fatigue as they were they recognized the woman. She was older than they had judged, but they knew her. They stared with bloodshot eyes, their swollen tongues hanging from their mouths.

"Marie!" said Boileau thickly.

"Marie!" echoed Carlson.

They might as well have saved their breath. Nobody paid the slightest attention.

"We're all right, mama; everything's all right, mama!"

It was the boy speaking, and he was speaking to her!

Pete Boileau looked at the wreck of what had been Spike Carlson; Carlson looked at the smoked remainder of Pete Boileau.

Slowly and gently, as succumbing to a doze, Pete sank downward until he sat in a collapse, his chin on his chest. Spike Carlson drooped gradually forward until he hung like a limp rag on the handles of the car.

"Hey!" called an observant man in the crowd. "Hey! Fetch that licker. The boys is all in."

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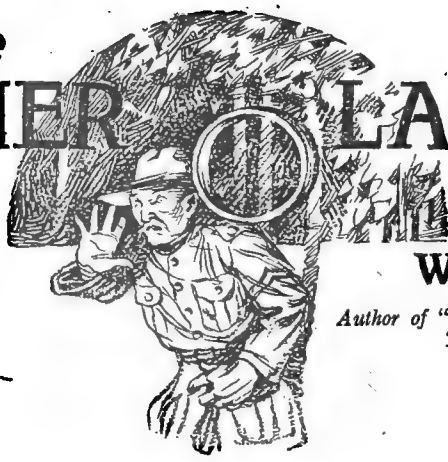
The HIGHER LAW



by M·S· WIGHTMAN

Author of "Unofficial," "A Crossed Trail," Etc.

"WELL, Peel," said Brock, pushing back his chair and lighting a cigaret, whose ashes he from time to time snuffed into the saucer of his coffee cup, "I don't agree with you. There is a higher law than ours, and from that law no man ever escapes. You remember Padre Alonzo, the chubby old priest at San Pedro. Turning Catholic had not destroyed his Oriental fatalism. 'No man ever avoids the consequences of his actions, señor,' he used to say. 'They are hung about his neck like a weight, and sooner or later he has to pay. It is the decree of fate.'

"And I have come to see that Padre Alonzo was right. Whether this man is caught or whether he is not, if you could see into his soul you would know that he will pay for what he has done."

I laid aside the morning's *Chronicle*. It contained a two-column account of the inquest over the body of an unknown woman who had been found murdered on the military reservation. The report had started our conversation, my comment that it looked as if the man who shot her would escape.

"Then what is the use of trying to trace criminals? Why not leave their punishment to the higher law?" I asked, perhaps with a slight show of flippancy.

Brock nodded to Segundo, the barefooted Filipino boy who stood behind his chair, to clear away the breakfast dishes. Then he turned to me and, although he was smiling, I felt that he was serious.

"I have a queer feeling about this case, Peel," he said, without replying to my question, "and you must admit that there has been a coincidence. It is five months since I reached Fort Thomas after leaving the Philippines, and during that time nothing eventful has happened. The days have simply been a round of routine. On Friday I received your telegram saying that you were stopping off for a few days on your way to the coast, and the next morning the whole post was agog over a murder mystery which seems to have baffled the police. Doesn't that strike you as odd?"

"No," I returned, somewhat puzzled, "it doesn't."

"Well," he said, rising and crossing to the window which overlooked the parade-ground, "but for that telegram I should have been attending a chess tournament in Chicago."

"So you think you were kept here for a purpose, do you? To see that the murderer is punished perhaps?" I asked after a pause.

He did not immediately reply. Then, turning his head, he called over his shoulder—

"Come here a minute."

With a smile he pointed to two figures who were crossing the parade-ground in the direction of his quarters. One, tall and slender, wearing khaki and brown, military boots, I recognized as Lieutenant Wring; the other, a shorter, squarer man, with an aggressive walk and a glimpse of bright-red hair showing beneath the brim of his straw hat, I did not recognize.

"That's Jacob Martin, the county prose-

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cutor, in charge of the case of which we were speaking," explained Brock.

"Have you been talking to him?" I asked.

"So far as I am aware Jacob Martin doesn't know Captain Brock, late of the general staff and now of the Tenth Field Artillery, exists," he returned.

"And you don't know what they want?"

He shook his head.

But we were not left long in doubt. As soon as Segundo had admitted them and Wring had introduced him, Jacob Martin came to the point of their visit.

"We are stuck, captain," he said. "We can't get hold of a clue of any kind, and the papers are hounding us to do something. I happened to be talking to Lieutenant Wring, and he suggested that you might help us; he said you had had a good deal of experience in such cases. Won't you see what you can make of it?"

Brock glanced at me, and I felt a start.

"What do you say, Peel? Do you want to spend your visit helping Mr. Martin?"

"We might hear the facts as he knows them," I suggested.

And when he had finished, I felt that if fate had kept Brock at Fort Thomas, it had not been for the purpose of solving Jacob Martin's problem.

THE woman, whom no one had recognized, had boarded the street car at Third and High streets in Abilene about nine o'clock at night, inquiring of the conductor whether it went to Fort Thomas. Later, referring to a letter which she took from her handbag, she asked him to put her off at Pride's Crossing, a stop at the edge of the military reservation.

He did so, and saw no one meet her, although as the car started forward again he thought he had heard a man's voice. The next morning her dead body had been found by a company on skirmish practise under Lieutenant Wring. There was a bullet-wound in her left breast made, so Captain Trotter, the post surgeon, testified, by a regulation army Colt. The weapon had not been located, nor had the man who had done the shooting left any traces by which he could be identified.

The murder, for such it obviously was, had taken place in an opening in the woods not far from Pride's Crossing, and while the ground had been trampled, as if a struggle had preceded the shooting, the grass had prevented the retention of any clear footprints.

"And none were found in the path?" inquired Brock.

Jacob Martin shook his head.

"None," he said. "The sun had baked that path as dry as a bone."

"And the letter of which the conductor spoke, I presume it had been removed from her handbag?"

The prosecutor glanced up, surprised.

"Yes, I looked for that particularly," he said. "And, by the way, the motive could not have been robbery, for her money had not been touched. Besides the money, something more than ten dollars, the bag only contained a handkerchief and an empty silver locket, with a broken chain."

Brock lit a cigaret and smoked it slowly, as if marshaling the facts in his mind.

"Obviously," said Wring, breaking a momentary silence, "the woman was shot by a man from the post."

"Obviously," returned Martin drily, "and there are only about a thousand men stationed here. All you have to do is to pick him out. What do you say, captain?" he went on, turning again to Brock. "Do the facts suggest anything to your mind? This is my first big case, and finding the man would mean a lot to me."

Brock tossed aside his cigaret, and his face lost its look of abstraction.

"Yes, they do, Mr. Martin," he said. "I don't believe a man could commit a crime like that without leaving behind him some evidence to connect him with it. As you say, all you have to do is to find that evidence. Suppose we examine the body again. I believe it was taken to the morgue."

"It is still there," answered Jacob Martin, a shade of disappointment in his tone, "but I don't think you will learn anything from it. I have gone over it a dozen times. Still if you like——"

"I should," said Brock with a smile, rising, "if only as a matter of form."

The body had been embalmed, and, as we entered the small room where it was lying on a marble slab, I could hardly repress a start of surprise. She was a middle-aged, if not an old woman, and there was something at once pathetic and repugnant about her. She was a wreck, a derelict.

Her look was hard and vindictive, and the tarnished finery of her clothes was in strange contrast to the gray streaks with which her

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thin, blond hair was shot through. For some reason I had expected to find a young woman, not this poor thing. But even as Brock bent over the body with a coolly appraising scrutiny, it occurred to me that if she belonged in Abilene, it should be easy to trace her—such women are usually known to the police. But if she came from a distance, and the letter and her evident unfamiliarity with the street-car service seemed to indicate that she had, tracing her would be hard. If she disappeared from her familiar haunts, who would care enough to inquire what had become of her?

At the end of perhaps fifteen minutes, Brock straightened up and drew back from the body.

Jacob Martin, who, leaning against the wall, had been following his examination closely but without comment, asked, a faintly patronizing note in his voice——

"Well, captain, did you find the clue?"

"Yes, Mr. Martin," returned Brock guilelessly, "I think I did. I should say that she was shot by her husband who had deserted her."

Jacob Martin left the wall with a bound.

"What's that, captain?" he cried excitedly, "Her husband, you say?"

Brock smiled.

"Yes, and I think she was probably trying to blackmail him."

For a moment Jacob Martin stared at him open-eyed. Then in a changed voice he asked——

"Look here, captain, have you some private information about this case?"

"No," said Brock, pointing to the body. "All the information I have is there. Tell me, what would you say her profession had been?"

The prosecutor stepped forward, his glance following the direction of the captain's finger.

"A woman of the streets," he said unhesitatingly.

"Yes, and one who was approaching the end of her string. Her clothes are flashy, but her cheeks are sunken and her hair streaked with gray. She still possessed the instinct to attract, but the time when she could do so had passed. As a public official, Mr. Martin, you know what the culmination of such a career is."

"Crime or the workhouse," said the prosecutor promptly.

"Exactly, and one usually precedes the other," Brock continued. "When such a woman is no longer able to make a living attracting men, she is usually put to desperate shifts to make money. This one had reached a point where she was willing to keep an appointment at night in a lonely part of the woods with a man who was desperate enough to shoot her. She had received a letter from him, so she must have known his character, and yet she went of her own volition. There must have been something illicit, if not criminal, in their relations, or they would not have met secretly at night. If a woman had a hold on a man and were blackmailing him, is it not the kind of meeting which would seem natural to her?

"And the man—he lured her out to a lonely spot where there would be no witnesses and there shot her. We may reasonably assume that he had planned the crime, for he went to the appointment armed."

Wring, who with his arms folded and his eyes fixed on Brock, had been absorbedly following the captain's deductions, broke in with a question—

"How do you know she did not have the pistol, Tommy?"

"Because," said Brock, "there was no place for her to have carried it. Trotter says the wound was made by an army Colt. That is a big weapon, too large for her handbag or to have been concealed about her person. No, her assailant had the revolver, and he had brought it there to use, for after the shooting he stopped to remove the evidence which would have connected him with the crime—another proof of his premeditation.

"Now the average man must be fairly desperate when he deliberately makes up his mind to commit murder. He knows that however carefully he prepares his alibi, there is the likelihood that he will omit some essential point. But there is something beyond, something higher than this—the instinctive repugnance of human nature against taking human life. You have no doubt observed, Mr. Martin, that only with the greatest difficulty can the average juror be brought to inflict the death penalty. We violate none of the probabilities in assuming that she had some powerful hold over him and was threatening to take advantage of it; and that he, goaded to desperation and seeing no other means of freeing himself, finally shot her. Is that clear, Mr. Martin?"

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The prosecutor let his eyes rest on the body of the woman. After a brief study, he turned them toward Brock.

"Well, captain," he said hesitatingly, "I don't see how you know the man was her husband."

Brock stepped forward to the marble slab. The woman's left hand was lying in plain view on her breast. It was a plump, somewhat sensuous hand, whose thick, full fingers seemed out of keeping with her thin cheeks and hair. More than once I had found myself staring at it.

"See here," he said, touching the base of her third finger, "that mark was made by a ring which she had worn so long that it has left its clear impress on her skin. You see that the mark nowhere varies in width. The ring was a plain one, a band; and plain, band rings are only worn on that finger to indicate marriage. It must have been her wedding ring. Now the ring is gone, yet you see how closely it fitted her finger. It could not have fallen off; indeed, it must have required considerable force and patience to remove it.

"We may now reconstruct the tragedy. The man years ago married the woman, and later deserted her. Probably he changed his name, went into the army and thought no more about the matter. It is not unusual; I could point out a dozen similar cases that have come under my notice. She kept the ring, wearing it had simply become a habit with her, and after a no doubt checkered life, finally reached the point where she was greatly in need of money.

"In some way she learned where her husband was and wrote, threatening to expose him unless he paid her to be silent. Just what her hold was we don't know; perhaps he had married again, perhaps there was an old crime of which she had knowledge; at any rate it was a powerful one.

"He tried various expedients to shake her off, but once such a woman has her clutches on a man she hangs on. At last he determined to shoot her, and for this purpose lured her out to the woods with a promise of money. She came, showed him the ring which contained his initials and by which their marriage could be proved and then he shot her.

"There Mr. Martin, you have an explanation of the case."

The prosecutor passed his hand across his red hair. His eyes were bright, but a frown between his brows indicated a troubled mind.

"But if he had changed his name, captain, what good would the ring be as evidence?" he asked.

"Acutely put," returned Brock with a smile. "But for one thing you must remember that a man in such circumstances is not a clear reasoner; and for another, in nine cases out of ten a man who changes his name to hide his identity does not change his initials. Probably they were still those engraved in the ring."

Men's minds are queer. That single statement by the captain, because it happened to fall in with Jacob Martin's experience, did more than all the rest of the deductions to win his enthusiastic belief in Brock's theory.

"You are right, captain!" he exclaimed. "I noticed that just the other day in a case —a case of desertion also. I believe we are going to find the man. What would you suggest now?"

Without replying, Brock led the way to the bright sunshine outside the morgue; but at its iron gate he paused.

"If I were you, Mr. Martin," he said in a brisker tone, "I should go into Abilene and try to stir up the police. I believe the woman came from a distance, and it should not be difficult to learn where she was stopping. Meanwhile we will go over to the scene of the shooting. Perhaps we can find the ring. If I learn anything I shall telephone you."

OUR visit was uneventful, and, as we returned to his quarters, Brock seemed unusually absent-minded and absorbed. Once I seized his arm and pulled him from under the very wheels of a motor which came suddenly upon us around a corner, and I do not believe that he noticed it.

He was then speaking of the battle of the Marne, and from this he proceeded to a discussion of horses; but, as we mounted the steps of his porch, he made a remark from which I knew that all the time his mind had been busy with the murder case.

"Peel," he said, turning to me suddenly, "I believe I can find it!"

"What, a cure for your pony's lameness?"

"No, the ring, man."

"You don't think he has destroyed it then?"

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"Of course he hasn't. He's afraid to throw it away, and yet he is afraid to keep it. That ring to him is as big as a house. I'll wager he breaks into a cold sweat every time any one goes within four feet of where he has hidden it. Let your imagination work, Peel. What would you do if you had in your possession a piece of evidence which your conscience made you feel would shout your guilt if discovered?"

"Bury it," I hazarded.

"No you wouldn't. You would be afraid a dog would dig it up. You would be looking for a chance to make away with it beyond any possibility of its discovery. Well, I am going to give the man such a chance."

"How?"

But he only shook his head, a smile in the depths of his blue eyes.

"We will see how it works first. Come on, we have just time for a game of chess before lunch."

That afternoon Brock made a trip to Abilene, for what purpose he did not say; and the next day we had word of the woman. The police had finally traced her to a cheap boarding-house on High Street, a neighborhood largely given over to lodgings of the poorer sort. She gave her name as Mrs. Rollins, and said she came from Chicago. Her only baggage was a shabby suit-case, which contained nothing to identify her. Jacob Martin had telegraphed her description to the Chicago police, with a request that they try to trace her.

"It is unlikely that they can," said Brock, as he hung up the telephone receiver. "The disappearance of such a woman means too little."

"And your own scheme, any news of that?" I inquired.

He shook his head.

"It's too early yet," he said.

Later, as I glanced through the morning *Chronicle*, a curious advertisement caught my eye. It occupied a quarter of the back page and was so skilfully spaced that a reader's attention was instinctively drawn to it. It stated that owing to the war there was a shortage in gold, and high prices would be paid for old jewelry, such as brooches and rings, which could be melted up for bullion. The address was that of a respectable firm of jewelers on Main Street.

"That is curious," I said, re-reading the advertisement.

"What?" asked Brock, looking up from a chess problem which he was working out at a small table in the corner.

"I thought the war had increased our gold supply, and yet these people advertise a shortage," I said.

Brock laughed.

"It has," he said. "That ad is the bait. I had some difficulty in persuading Miller & Fitch to let that statement go in; but it was important, and since I am paying for the space they finally agreed. The trade in second-hand jewelry is a regular part of their business. If our man sees that ad—and I think he will for since the army is in Mexico the men read the *Chronicle* religiously—I take it he will reason like this. He has a ring of which he wishes to be rid. Ordinarily he might hesitate to take it to a second-hand shop, but the war makes a special case of it—people believe anything they see in print about the war.

"He will say to himself that a great many other people are taking their jewelry to Miller & Fitch so his sale will not attract notice. And the ring is to be melted into bullion; that is the great thing. There will be a final end to this piece of evidence which is keeping him awake at night. I should say that to-morrow or Friday at the latest, we should hear from that advertisement, if the man hasn't already destroyed the ring."

"And you don't believe that he has?"

"According to my theory it should still be in his possession," said Brock levelly, as he dropped his glance again to the chessboard. But his hands fingered his cigaret instead of the pieces.

I knew that he was thinking of old Padre Alonzo's theory of the decree of fate. As a matter of fact the chain of circumstances was peculiar. It had been an unaccountable impulse which had led me to telegraph Brock, after I had definitely made up my mind to surprise him. If any one but Wring had discovered the body, it would probably never have occurred to Jacob Martin to seek Brock's assistance, and but for Brock the loss of the ring would not have been noticed. I, too, have lived in the East, and I confess I began to have a mysterious feeling about the case.

It was no surprise, then, when on Friday morning the telephone rang, and Miller & Fitch asked Brock to come into Abilene.

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He returned in time for lunch, and, although I was eager with curiosity, I could get from him nothing but the bare statement that he had the ring until we had lighted our cigarets and gone into the living-room. Then he turned to me, a troubled look on his round face.

"Peel," he said, "I can't make it out. Who do you suppose sold that ring? Sergeant Ruger! No, there is no mistake. As you see it contains his initials, 'J. R.' and the clerk's description fits him exactly."

I knew then the reason for Brock's manner. If I had been told to hazard a guess as to the murderer, from grizzled old Colonel Winters down to the rawest rookie, Commissary Sergeant Joseph Ruger would have been my last choice.

He was a character. I had known both him and his placid, motherly wife well in the Philippines, and only a few months before a syndicated story of his life together with his portrait had appeared in the Sunday magazines.

He was a sloping-shouldered little man, with a quiet, unassuming manner, and a drooping brown mustache beginning to turn gray. Judged by any standard, Joseph Ruger's life had been a success. When he had entered the army as a cook almost thirty years before, he had possessed nothing but a somewhat broken vocabulary and willingness to work hard. Shortly afterward he had married Mary O'Hara, an Irish immigrant girl who cooked for the colonel of his regiment, and in his spare hours he had taken to soliciting life insurance.

The union had prospered; the sergeant and his wife were rich, not in any fabulous, Wall Street sense, but the immediate occasion of writing his history had been the sale of a piece of water-front property at a New Jersey resort for forty thousand dollars. He had bought it years before while stationed at Governor's Island with the first thousand dollars he had saved. But success had not spoiled the Rugers; their daily lives differed in no fundamental respects from that of their fellow non-coms., except that Mrs. Ruger now washed no clothes but their own.

"It is for the girl we are saving, sir. We want her to start where we couldn't," he once said to me, his eyes fixed on a silver frame containing the portrait of a wide-eyed girl, with wavy hair, a picture which looked as if it might have wandered down from officers' row. She was now attending a boarding-school in Washington.

In a few months Sergeant Ruger would retire with something like seventy dollars a month pay, the respect of his superior officers, and the universal liking of his fellow rankers. One might have pardoned some self-assertion or aggressiveness in his manner. It was, however, self-effacing, retiring. In a less successful man I should have attributed his quietness to fear; in the sergeant I attributed it to the underlying melancholy of his Hungarian temperament.

Following Brock's statement that Joseph Ruger had sold the ring, there was a long pause. Brock was smoking, his eyes fixed meditatively on the ceiling, his arms stretched out unmoving along the sides of his chair, except when occasionally he raised his hand to flick the ashes from his cigaret.

"Well," I asked at length, "what are you going to do now?"

"Do?" he echoed, for the first time in my experience showing a trace of irritation, "I am going to face the sergeant with the ring and then turn him over to Jacob Martin. I wouldn't have thought him capable of such a crime, but the temptations must have been overpowering. Of course it meant the wreck of everything for him." Presently, after a brief pause, he let his glance rest on me, "And now, Peel, will you tell me that a man does not pay for his wrongs?"

There was nothing stagy in either his voice or his manner; only the curiosity which naturally accompanies a question.

I made no answer. I was thinking of the sergeant's manner. Had the fear of this woman been hanging over his head for thirty years?

It was six o'clock when in response to a message sent him by Brock, Sergeant Ruger mounted the porch in front of the captain's quarters. From the sound of his footsteps one could read his mental perturbation. Midway of the porch he came to a full stop, and it needed no great imagination to picture his struggle against a desire to turn and flee. He must have mastered it, however, for after a moment he stepped forward and rang the bell.

Brock, who, since returning from a long ride that afternoon, had been immersed in a heavy volume, Thompson's "Cavalry Tactics," closed the book and laid it on the

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table beside him. Our curtains had been drawn and the reading lamp lighted, although it was not within an hour of darkness outside.

"There he is now. Sit over there, Peel. We'll put him in the light," he said, rising and calling "Come in" in response to a knock which had followed the shuffle of feet in the hall.

Segundo opened the door and disappeared. In the opening stood Sergeant Ruger, his campaign hat in his hand, his eyes blinking slightly, as if to accustom himself to the softer light of the room.

"Did the captain wish to see me?" he asked in a hesitating voice.

"Yes, sergeant, come in and close the door," said Brock coolly.

And, when he had placed the old non-com. in the chair by the reading light, he stepped back and picked up a small box which had been lying on the table. It contained the ring.

"Sergeant," he said, "just why did you entice that woman out to the woods and then shoot her?"

And oddly enough there was nothing startling in the effect the question produced in the man to whom it was addressed. He leaned forward in his chair and looked up at the captain, as if he had not clearly heard what had been said, but I noticed that his hand clutched more tightly the campaign hat which he was still holding.

"I hardly think you will deny doing it, sergeant," continued Brock, after a brief pause, "for we have the ring which you took from her finger and later sold to Miller & Fitch. See, here it is, with your initials, 'J. R.', engraved inside."

As he spoke he uncovered the box and held out the gold circlet in his hand. For a moment Sergeant Ruger stared at it; then he sank back with a groan.

"I knew I was doing wrong in selling it!" he cried, and from the unconscious outburst I knew that Brock had been right. Since the murder the possession of the ring had haunted the man who owned it.

"Well, sergeant—" began Brock.

But before he could complete his sentence, Joseph Ruger sprang from his chair, and, struggling wildly to maintain his footing for a moment, fell heavily to the floor.

"Quick, Peel, the spirits in that flask there," called Brock, bending over the prostrate man.

For a minute it looked as if Joseph Ruger had escaped the law; but presently on the couch where we carried him, he opened his eyes, and after a gasping intake of breath sat up weakly.

"Here, sergeant, drink this," said Brock, offering him another measure of brandy; and then by dint of questioning we learned his story.

IT WAS a simple story enough. He had met and married the woman in Chicago a few months after coming to this country, and a year later deserted her. He offered no excuse for his conduct, but it was plain she had been difficult to live with, a querulous, nagging woman who had married him only to escape the drudgery of a waitress in a cheap boarding-house.

He had changed his name from Josef Radowiscz to Joseph Ruger, a name which he had seen on the window of a store and which impressed him because it had the same initials.

"Why didn't you change them?" I asked.

"I had some shirts, sir. They were marked J. R. I thought it would be easier to keep the letters the same."

Later he had entered the army and married his present wife without telling her of his previous experience. Then, shortly after his picture and the article had appeared in the Sunday supplements, he had received a letter from the woman he had deserted. Whether she recognized him, or was struck by the similar initials and the fact that he was a Hungarian immigrant, or whether she was simply taking a long, desperate chance to obtain money, he did not know.

Personally I think it was the latter, and that, had he written her indignantly denying his identity, he would have heard no more from her. But it did not occur to him to deny it. All through his story had run the feeling that he had done wrong and that some time he would have to pay for it. Evidently he had never lost the feeling that some day the wife whom he had deserted would find him.

"When I saw that envelope, sir," he said, "I knew it was from her. How? I don't know. Just something inside told me."

He sent her money, first fifty dollars, then a hundred, which, judging from her appearance, she must have squandered for drink and in carousing. Then she, no doubt sensing his fear, had demanded a settlement, half of

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what he possessed, threatening exposure and a prosecution for bigamy if he refused.

"I was near crazy, sir," said the sergeant, stretching his hand toward Brock in an unconsciously pathetic gesture. "If she got half, I knew she'd keep on till she got all, and even then she wouldn't keep quiet. It wasn't so much me, sir, I guess I had earned what was coming. It was Mary and our girl. I couldn't see why they should suffer for what I'd done."

Finally he made up his mind to shoot her, and wrote suggesting that she meet him at Pride's Crossing where they could talk things over. Either her cupidity allayed any fears which the appointment might have raised, or she remembered what a mild, inoffensive man Josef Radowiscz had been; at any rate she agreed to come and he sent her the money for her ticket.

"I was surprised, sir, when I saw her, she had changed so much," he said naïvely in describing the meeting. "And it occurred to me that I had changed too, and she couldn't prove we had ever been married. But she showed me the ring and said the record of the wedding was on file in Chicago. Then, captain, I pretended to get mad and took out the pistol intending to shoot her; but somehow I couldn't do it, I just couldn't make myself pull the trigger. But she got scared and grabbed it, and while we were fighting for it, the pistol went off and shot her."

"What?" exclaimed Brock, startled into an exclamation of surprise.

For the first time the sergeant hesitated, and his face, which had been pale, reddened slowly.

"Yes, sir, perhaps you won't believe me—maybe I wouldn't if I was you—but I didn't shoot her. As God hears me, she shot herself," and involuntarily his fingers made the sign of the cross.

Brock drew back and let his eyes rest levelly on Sergeant Ruger's face.

"How do you know that, sergeant?" he asked.

"Because, sir, when she fell she had the pistol in her hand. I had to open her fingers to get it out."

For a minute Brock sat studying the sergeant, and I sat studying them both. The captain's round, chubby face and mild, blue eyes gave no hint of what was passing in his mind. Did he believe what Joseph Ruger had said, and if so would he let him go? Or would that stern sense of duty, instinctive with every officer worthy of the name, compel him, even against his wish, to deliver the sergeant up for trial? Knowing Brock, I feared the outcome, for I did not doubt that the sergeant had spoken the truth.

Suddenly there came the ring of the telephone in the hallway outside, and Segundo, appearing in the doorway, called Brock. We waited in silence while muffled and indistinct came the sound of his speaking.

I looked at the sergeant; he was bending forward, his hands crossed in his lap, his eyes fixed on the floor. There was weariness in his attitude, but I thought I detected something else—relief, a relaxing of the strain which had possessed him when he entered.

When Brock returned he brought with him a hammer and a square piece of iron, evidently the cook's implements for cracking nuts. These he placed on the table. Then he turned to Joseph Ruger.

"Sergeant," he said, "that telephone message was from Jacob Martin. He says the police have been unable to find any trace of the woman in Chicago. What was her address?"

"Her letters all came to me from Detroit, sir," returned the sergeant.

For a moment Brock was silent, and I judged his thoughts were turned inward for he caught his lip reflectively between his teeth. At last, as if he had reached a decision, he looked up and when he spoke there was a brisk incisiveness in his tone.

"Sergeant," he said, "each of us must do his duty as he sees it. I may be wrong, but I told Jacob Martin that I had discovered nothing. It seems to me that you have already paid for the wrong you did, and that some power beyond us saved you from committing a crime for which there could be no atonement. This ring is the only evidence connecting you with the woman who was killed, and that evidence we will destroy now."

As he spoke he placed the band upon the piece of iron and brought the hammer down sharply upon it. A few moments later the ring was only a thin sheet of glistening metal which he tossed into the waste basket.

"Good night, sergeant," said Brock, and, as the door closed behind the retreating figure, he turned to me. His blue eyes were shining.

"The higher law, Peel," he said.

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The DAMNED OLD NIGGER

by TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "The Soul of a Regiment," "The Winds of the World," etc.

HE BEGAN—so far as this story is concerned—by being fetch-and-carry boy to one of the officers who helped dam back the rising Mahdi flood and paved the way for "Chinese" Gordon's death. He stood six feet six inches in the coal-black skin God gave him. He was eight-and-forty inches round the chest, and his huge, black, muscle-lumpy arms reached nearly to his knees when he stood bolt upright. His grin, too, was a thing to wonder at.

He was being tortured when the British found him. One regiment—half starved but full of everlasting fight—had gone on a foray to provide itself with food, such being the time-honored tactics of the borderline. The foray materialized, but all the loot that fell to it on that occasion was a coal-black lump of unenlightened savage, with thongs twisted 'round his wrists and ankles until they had cut into his flesh, and with the raw red wheals of a dervish *kourbash* cross-sliced on his shoulders.

"Good Lord deliver us!" exclaimed the British officer who first stooped over him and sawed the thongs loose with his sword.

"Good Lord deliver us!" he growled again, as he sluiced the precious water from his flask over the bleeding, sun-festered wounds. And those were the first words that the captive heard or learned in the language of his new masters.

"Lordy liverus!" he answered with a nod and a gigantic grin that was meant to betoken harmlessness, and friendliness, and fear, and relief, and many other things—and managed to convey an expression of them all.

"Lordy liverus!" he babbled, when they asked him what his name might be. They tried him again in Arabic, and in a dozen or more dialects of it; but "Lordy liverus!" was all that they could get out of him, said over and over again with growing fluency and a firm conviction that it was a password to the good-will of his captors.

The officer who cut his thongs had used it; therefore, if he used the words himself, he would be helped again; that much was perfectly obvious to any man. So "Lordy liverus!" he said, nodding and grinning, and they bandaged up his shoulders for him. That settled it, of course; the words were a magic formula.

There was nobody who understood his language, or who knew where he came from, or what his tribe was, or in fact anything at all about him. There was nobody who cared very much, for that matter, once his immediate sufferings had been attended to. They just christened him Lordy Liverus, and cut it short to Lordy, and gave him work to do after the manner of the Anglo-Saxon the wide world over. And so enlightenment began.

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They discovered before long that he could carry one hundred and twenty pounds or more, perched on his shiny, shaven cranium, and make almost nothing of it. He could march forty miles across the bone-dry, dazzling desert, and make himself useful about the camp when the march was over. He could grin when he was spoken to, and when he wasn't spoken to, and in-between-times; how he could grin! And he kept that ebony hide of his as polished and glistening as if it had been Government accouterments. All that was soldierly, of course, and earned him brotherhood.

And then, one day, after a long desultory skirmish with the Arabs, he looted the white cotton clothing from the body of a bullet-riddled sheik, and new enlightenment was forced on him. He wore the clothing until the oil, with which he rubbed himself whenever he could get the chance, had soaked into it and had turned as rancid as Gehenna. The clothing stank, and all but rotted from him, and they walloped him for being dirty. They whacked him until the grin transformed itself into an enormous cavern, white-fringed with ivory, and his "Lordy liverus!" gave place to yells of anguish that could be heard a mile away.

So he learned to wash his clothes, and that is the beginning of new birth to the black man.

He got no pay in those days; but he had no use for it. He was being paid in kind. For the first time since he had been dragged off by dervish raiders from the grass hut in some distant Nile-bank village, he was receiving decent treatment and being beaten only when he misbehaved; and that was seldom.

His own undoctrinized philosophy, which had been handed down to him like woodcraft, and sense of direction, and honesty, from ancestor to ancestor since the days of Ham, taught him that it was good to obey, and grin, and not be beaten. And there was that something in him that establishes the difference between mere animals and human beings that made him realize that these deadly energetic white men were held together by a common reverence for something that was not concrete.

Had there been a word for patriotism in his black vocabulary, he would not have understood its meaning; and loyalty must have been synonymous in his mind with dread of the *kourbash* and the men who wielded it. He had no religion that anybody could discover, and the devils he believed in were all bad devils that a man must pacify with offerings in kind.

And yet, self-taught by observation and the craving to catch up that is inborn in even the wildest men, he learned to salute the colors when he passed them. And through that little opening the Big Idea crept in.

It dawned on his dim, awakening intelligence—how or exactly when no man knew, but it dawned—that the colors stood for something. He discovered that they were not a toy, or a decoration, in spite of the fact that they were the most gorgeously beautiful thing that had ever dazzled him; and they possessed no concrete, magic power, for the white men had let him touch them, and even carry them. And they were not a god or a devil; he was sure of that because he had cleaned boots in the same tent with them and had made experiments. They were just a gaudy piece of cloth, fastened to a pole by hooks and silken cords. And yet . . . .

When the regiment he followed slept one night, and the pickets, weary with a long day's marching, dozed with fixed bayonets underneath their chins; when a band of marauding dervishes crawled in along a sand-dune, and a sudden night alarm set bugles blaring, and the silence burst into wild, horrible confusion, with tent-ropes cut, and horses and camels plunging wildly through the camp, and long knives slithering in and out amid the blackness; when men shouted and rushed blindly, helter-skelter, everywhere, lunging at shadows with their bayonets and firing on friend and foe alike—then it was Lordy Liverus who found the colors first and stood guard over them, and killed with his two bare hands a dervish who lusted for them.

It was Lordy Liverus who dragged them out of the fallen tent from between the two knife-slain sentinels, and set them up in the middle of the camp for the men to form on, and yelled to them until they did form.

And it was Lordy Liverus bleeding, grinning, stark naked, and unashamed, who bore them at daybreak to the commanding officer and acknowledged his salute with an even greater grin on his face than ever.

He was one of the regiment after that—unpaid, of course, and unenlisted, but one of them. He was hail fellow well met with

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every one from sergeant downward. They had a thump on the back for him, or a handshake, or a chew of plug tobacco, and a place for him beside the camp-fire when his work was done.

It was only a little regiment in the first place—four hundred strong or so—and not one of the Regular Line; and casualties had thinned it. It was a mere handful of lost sheep and younger sons, recruited from God-knew-where-nor-cared, and sent off with a blessing to hold down a borderline. So there was no matter of red tape or precedent to stand in the way of their adopting Lordy; they did just as they pleased about it and made him Supernumerary Color-Guard, with leave to work rather harder than the average, and draw rations when there were any, and sleep on the clean dry sand and make himself at home.

AND Lordy throve on it. He grew fluent in a wondrous language of his own devising, helped to it by his taskmasters, who took iniquitous delight in teaching him the longest and the most improper words they knew. He mixed up his English with fragmentary Arabic, and tongue-tied the jargon into knots with a smattering of his own incomprehensible and unpronounceable mother speech; and the resulting chaos—his adjectives were swear words culled from four different languages—would have brought tears from a philologist, or blushes from a deep-sea mariner.

But they taught him other things besides the art of half intelligible speech. As, for instance, how to chew tobacco, and clean a rifle, and play cards; and how to do what he didn't want to do when nobody was watching him, and grin while he was doing it because all of it (not excepting the grin) was included in "the game;" and what "the game" meant and, how to play it—with both hands, and both feet, and ears and teeth and eyes, from sunrise to sunset and all the way around the clock again, without fear of punishment or hope of just reward, but simply because it was "the game." It took a long time to teach him that, but he learned it because he was a decent black man and had it in him.

And he taught them some things. They found that he possessed a number of accomplishments that they had hitherto believed impossible. He could pick up a living scorpion by the tail and crack it between his huge black fingers, or toss it stingless and harmless into a camp-fire, or fling it with a jerk on to a rock and kill it. He thought nothing of the trick; but they made a great deal of money from the men of other regiments that they met from time to time, by backing him to do it.

He could snap a cleaning-rod between the fingers of one hand—they had to be chary of that trick, for spare cleaning-rods were scarce—and he could pick up two men, one in either of his tremendous arms, and run with them for a mile or more if they would let him. And he could throw the best wrestlers in the regiment; not a man of them could hold him for a minute.

His tricks, though, were all savage tricks, and theirs the painfully acquired accomplishments of drilled men. So of course theirs triumphed over his. He despised his own achievements and took childish, ingenuous delight in learning theirs.

And of all the wonders that set his thick lips spreading into that tremendous grin, it was the words of command that tickled his fancy most—the hoarse-flung, staccato orders, that could set the long line twisting into fours in the batting of an eyelash, that started and stopped the tight-ripped volleys, or brought a hundred rifles like one flash leaping from ground to shoulder.

So they took pains to teach them to him and explain their meaning; and Lordy Liverus worked them painfully into his vocabulary, and grinned, and muttered them, and paid ten times over for the teaching with the strength and great good-nature that were all he had.

Then temporary peace came, and the disbanding of the regiment. The Cabinet at Home—Lordy had no notion what the Cabinet might be, but "Home" was overseas, where the men of the regiment came from—decided in its more than human wisdom that the border war was ended, and that Egypt and the Nile were safe. So there was peace; the Queen's speech said so at the opening of Parliament. And the men of the regiment received a year's back pay, and a silver medal each, and a discharge.

Lordy went down to Cairo with them—laughing with them on the long, cross-desert, thirsty marches; crooning to them when the clear moon that lights the muddy Nile shone down on dahabiyehs and dhows

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and the oars creaked in the silence, the age-old lullabys his mother sang to him under the grass-roofed hut beyond the Bahr-el-Ghazal; working for them still, cleaning boots and rifles for them, and asking nothing in return but occasional tobacco and a slap between the shoulders; happy as only savages and children can be happy, and utterly unconscious of what the journey meant. He was one of the regiment, content to journey with the regiment and to laugh and starve and toil with it—and even more content to loaf with it, now that the strenuous time seemed over and playtime had come for good.

But after that came Cairo, and disillusionment. The men who had kicked his schooling into him, and shared their tobacco with him, and had taught him almost all he knew—and absolutely all that he thought worth knowing—drew their pay and drifted to the bars, and the dance-halls, and the gambling-hells. Now, instead of looting what he needed from his erstwhile torturers, after seeing them smashed by the Only Regiment into scooting, scattering detachments, he discovered to his vast amazement that necessities cost money. And he had no money.

Cairo amazed him. The crowds, and the hurry, and the splendor frightened him. The brass band playing underneath the neat octagonal pavilion filled his unsophisticated soul with new emotions—uncontrollable because he did not even know they were emotions. Desire — devil - sent for aught he knew—took hold of him and bade him dance and yell, and spin himself 'round and 'round on tiptoe like a top; and he obeyed the desire, until an Arab policeman beat him on his shaven skull with a club and ordered him away.

He was hungry then, as well as half beside himself. So he helped himself to fruit at an open stall; and another policeman chased him; and a pasha's horses, driven at a swinging canter through the street, knocked him rolling into the gutter. It was too much for him. He picked himself up and wandered back bewildered to his commanding officer and set himself to cleaning boots again. That was something that he knew and understood.

But there was more bewilderment in store for him. The commanding officer fed him and housed him for a week or two, and kept him busy; there were accounts to be gone into, and the usual waste of a campaign to be accounted for, and plenty of cleaning up and stowing work for a man who was all good-will and muscle. The officer worked hard, and so did Lordy; but the officer found time to include him in the list of regimental supernumeraries.

The big black infant stared open-eyed one morning at an official document that was pushed into his hands. Some one seized a hand and made him mark a cross on it, and another person made a wiggly mark beside the cross, and then the old world came to an end and a new world —vivid, and colorful, and sweet—blazed up before his dazzled eyes. Two whole years' pay—a pile of silver far beyond his utmost ability to count—was heaped in front of him, and the commanding officer, with his own hand, pinned a silver medal on his blouse!

WHAT followed was unavoidable, of course, but none the less deplorable. Lordy was a free man with money of his own, that he had earned, and that was made for spending. He must do something with his money and his freedom, and must do the right something—then, immediately, at once.

What was right? Who had taught him what was right, and had kicked him until he did it, and rewarded him with grins when he had done it? The men of the regiment. And what had they done? They had gone to the Fish Market, and the bazaars, and even more lurid places. The Fish Market drew him into its glittering spider-snare, and sucked him dry, and spewed him out again.

He turned himself loose there among the Greeks and Arabs and all the conscienceless riffraff of the Levant, with all that good silver money jingling in a bag tied around his middle, and his shining medal pinned on to his bosom, and a savage's capacity for huge enjoyment multiplied by ten for the medal's sake.

The weird, wild splurge that followed lasted one night, and a day, and a part of the night that followed. And then the Greeks and Armenians had his money, and Lordy had nothing but his medal left, and a once-white suit of clothes, and a brand of headache that was altogether new in his experience. Just then, the headache seemed the most important of his possessions; it

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outached the medal even. Not that the medal did not ache, though. He put it in his pocket, for the very sight of it shamed him to the marrow. Enlightenment had not been transitory; it had sunk into his bones and stuck.

At that stage, a labor-recruiting agent tried to change the course of history, and nearly managed it. He found Lordy sprawling in the shade behind a mosque, and offered the big black man employment on the coal floats at Port Said. But the headache and the agent's oiliness saved him for greater things.

To Lordy it seemed fitting that a white man should give orders, and not persuade. If the agent had ordered him to the coal floats he might possibly have gone; but the Fish Market had taught him all that he desired to know about the white man who seduced instead of ordering. And, hungry and ashamed though he was, even Lordy Liverus had no immediate desire for work, with that devil-invented torture underneath his skull. The labor-recruiting agent wasted twenty minutes on him, and a vast amount of polyglot persuasion, and finally consigned him to the everlasting underworld and left him.

Later in the day the coal-black giant rose painfully and walked into a less-villainous quarter of the city. Experience had taught him that where white men were, there was also food and welcome, if possibly a kick or two and some abuse, for the black man who could clean accouterments and grin. So he sought out the nearest barracks, finding them as if by instinct, and sauntered by them, feeling even lonelier and even more ashamed as their military neatness met his gaze.

He had pinned his medal on again, with a view to establishing his fellowship with fighting-men; but his sense of desolation deepened as he neared the barracks, and he unpinned it furtively and hid it in his pocket. Hunger and loneliness and headache made him walk native fashion and slovenly, and he forgot altogether to imitate the swagger that the regiment had taught him; but he grinned a little, for old acquaintance's sake. And a white man in a neat white uniform—a gray-haired white man, with tired gray eyes, and a red fez perched on his head, and four chevrons and a crown on his right arm, and a swagger cane beneath his armpit—stood with his feet a little way apart and eyed him with rather more than curiosity.

This was a real white man evidently, without an atom of seduction in his make-up. Lordy recalled the regimental decencies at once. He halted with the semblance of a jerk, and faced about, and grinned in real earnest. He stood with his muscle-knotted legs apart, and his shoulders stooped, and his big splay toes turned in; but his right arm licked upward with the palm of the hand extended, and there was no mistaking his salute.

And Sergeant-Instructor William Stanford Grogram, V.C., D.S.M., late of the True and Tried and now Instructor by Special Appointment to the First Egyptian Foot, recognized food for powder on the instant. He beckoned to him; and Lordy showed two more inches of glistening ivory, and came.

II

THE recruiting of the First Egyptian Foot was still proceeding at the time when Lordy slouched up to the barrack gate in answer to Grogram's summons. Grogram had scarcely more than begun to realize the magnitude of the task in front of him, and had failed so far to find a single point that he had in common with his charges that he might use as an entering wedge of understanding.

Lordy was the first of all of them to master the jaw-breaking pronunciation of Grogram's name; it was he who first described him to the rest as "Goglam," and so made of him a personality whom they could grasp, and realize, and like. "Sergeant Instructor" was a compound word that meant as much to them as "Abracadabra;" "Grogram" was a mouthful of explosives that was shorter but just as difficult and meaningless; but "Goglam!" That was another matter! It was name and title combined, and tripped lightly off their guttural-loving tongues. When a raw, bewildered native of the Nile-bank country, or the Bahr-el-Ghazal, has once got a white man's name right, and has rolled it round his tongue a time or two and memorized it and found it good, he is ready to like that white man—if the white man has it in him.

Lordy liked him from the start, because he preached what the first white men he had known preached, and did it better;

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and, since Lordy was the first of all of them to pass through his recruit course, the others looked up to him, and bowed to his better judgment, and proceeded to like "Goglam" too.

In those early days Lordy was Goglam's one faint spark of hope—the one giant of all those ignorant, unthinking, unwieldy, full-grown-infant giants who gave him an imaginative glimpse sometimes of what the regiment might some day come to be. He became the pattern, who was stood out on parade to show them. He became the interpreter, for Goglam was but learning Arabic and was nothing of a linguist. Lordy's weird, mixed-up jargon was unmilitary and exceedingly profane, but it explained things, and Goglam believed in explanations. He became a sort of go-between between Goglam and the rank and file. And his shaven, shiny, grinning head began to swell.

Soon he was giving orders and making explanations on his own account; so the perfectly impartial Goglam whipped him.

That, of course, was anticlimax, and it hurt far more than skin deep. There came a period when he sulked, and like a great spoiled baby did everything wrong that had two ways of being done. He annoyed Goglam in a hundred different ways—left him to interpret himself single-handed, which of course was capital for Goglam and the regiment, omitted the self-appointed task of polishing his boots for him at daybreak, and neglected to grin, which was the deepest depth he reached.

And Goglam, who could diagnose the state of mind of a recruit as accurately and quickly as he could spot a dirty button, or a rifle held a half-inch crooked, or a quarter-inch of pipe-clay lacking from a belt, read him the Riot Act. He sentenced him to pack drill through a long, hot afternoon, and deviled him unmercifully on parade, and treated him between times as if they were two wise men who understood each other. So, presently Full Private Lordy Liverus did understand.

And then the brand-new colors came and were presented to the regiment. There were no native non-commissioned officers as yet, and Full Private Lordy Liverus—medal and all—was assigned to carry them; and now Lordy was his old gigantic, grinning, happy self again. Goglam, watching as he always watched, smiled to himself in secret as he saw the swagger grow again in Lordy's gait, and his chin come up, and his shoulders square themselves, and his huge white ivories glisten all the time.

The abstract meaning of the colors was nothing new to Lordy, though, even with his amazing wealth of hell-invoking adjectives that meant so many things, he found it difficult to put it into words; but he did his level best to help Goglam teach the others, if only for his own importance' sake. For the second time in his life now, he was color-guard, but this time not supernumerary; he was the real, red, roaring thing, and pride became his middle name.

The more that Goglam preached about the colors' sacredness—the more that the big black mummy-men, goaded and roused and lifted and at last awakened by the lone-handed ex-sergeant major, began to fuse into a living unit around the piece of silk that bore nothing yet save an un-fire-weaned regimental crest—the greater and the more worth while grew Lordy's pride, and the greater his efficiency.

He carried the colors as lance corporal—the first man in the regiment to win promotion; he was the first to be made a corporal, and as such he still carried them. And when the regiment—a real regiment at last, thanks to the tireless efforts of the one lone man who gave all that he had in him to make it so—swung down to the steamer behind its fifes and drums on the first stage of its fateful journey to Khartum, Lordy was color-sergeant.

The pole from which the colors hung trembled in its sling from mixed pride and emotion. The great, good-natured grin had lost its childishness. His face shone with a new-found dignity, and his swing, and his stride, and even the set of his *tarboosh* showed that Lordy was a Nile mummy-man no longer, but a stanch and trustworthy player of "the game."

III

THE last act in the drama of the First Egyptian Foot was played at Khartum behind a dropped curtain. No man knew, nor ever will know, exactly what took place there. Gordon was killed, and most of the First Egyptian Foot died somewhere near him—caught at the last minute without its officers, but rallying to the end round Goglam and the colors. Those who did escape from the shambles

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near the Residency had been left for dead by the dervishes, and the handful who finally reached Egypt after sufferings that are scarcely understandable, died when they got there without giving any very clear account of what had happened. Their memories were dead before they died.

So how Lordy was taken prisoner — whether before Gordon's death or at the time of it—was never known. It is certain only that he was made prisoner, and that he was starved and vilely tortured. He could never talk of it, because the cruelty he underwent, and the thankless, brutal servitude that led nowhither, and brought not even theoretical reward, blotted out his memory. He was forced to serve men now whose very promised paradise was based on slavery—whose flag was a gaudy green thing that waved over butchered prisoners and ravaged villages; no man respected it or them. It, and they, stood for broken promises and bestial vengeance, and their banner was as sacred as their Mahdi's word—no more.

It is also certain that he broke away at last. And because illimitable desert and the dervish hordes lay between him and Egypt, he trailed southward, ever southward, along the Nile. He was a savage again—reverted, possessed of a savage fear of capture, running, hiding among the Nile reeds, running ever to the southward where his home had been; and then on southward, because there was nothing of his home left but ashes and a broken cooking-pot or two amid the undergrowth. The dervishes had been there too. To the northward lay a hell that haunted him, and to the southward there might possibly be peace. He ran.

HE CAME into touch with history again years and years after Gordon's death and the downfall of Khartum. At a little walled-in *boma* in Uganda, where the East African Chartered Company had built a trading-station at the farthest outside limit of the Empire, a giant of a negro shambled in one afternoon and grinned.

He was scarred until scarcely a square inch of his ebony skin was without a mark of some kind. There were marks of fire on him, and of the *kourbash*, and of shackles. One ear had been lopped off, and there were soul-revolting proofs that thorns had been driven underneath his fingernails. His limp was permanent; he had been beaten on the soles of both his feet until a bone in one of them had cracked. And there was no means of judging his age, for his crinkled hair was white, and when a negro reaches that stage further demarcation ceases.

He limped through the *boma* gate and grinned obsequiously, much as a stray mongrel wags his tail when he is doubtful of hospitality; and a white man, sprawling in a long chair on a bungalow veranda, stared at him with interest. But he took no notice of the white man. In the middle of the *boma*, from a roughly rounded pole, there drooped and waved a flag. It was undersized, and torn, and stained, and faded; but it still looked what it was, a Union Jack, and it seemed to fascinate him. He seemed unable to take his eyes away from it. He tottered to it, bending his head back as he neared it, to keep it in full view—until his chin sank no longer on his breast, but was as level as a soldier's chin. And, as his chin rose, his great broad shoulders spread themselves.

"Gad!" said the white man in the easy chair. "I'll bet that boy's been drilled!"

He watched him with even greater interest as he halted, twenty paces from the pole, with his eyes still on the flag. They were glistening, now, those tortured eyes of his, and they looked younger than they had done when he slouched in through the gate. He seemed to be waiting for something—for memory, perhaps, or for an order. And then suddenly his whole frame stiffened until he stood erect, and he saluted and stood rigid at the salute, like a coal-black Tommy Atkins.

"*Njo hapa!*" said the white man, trying him in Kiswahili. But he took no notice.

"Come over here, you!" he called to him, and the giant answered on the instant. He came running, limping, floundering, uttering wild ejaculations of delight. And when Lordy reached the white man he fell prone at the other's feet, sobbing, laughing, searching in his mind for something—beating at his temples with both fists to jog his memory. Then suddenly the past came back to him and real language—real, clean, barrack-gotten Anglo-Saxon.

"Oh, hell!" he shouted. "Hell! Hell! Bloody hell!" It was the first time he had heard or spoken English since General Gordon's death.

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IV

THERE followed months of ease, if not of dignity. That was a trading-station, and not a home for the decrepit, but they gave him a hut to himself to sleep in; and since he was not restless, nor given to roaming apparently, and made a perfectly efficient watch-dog, they let him draw rations. So he ate his rations, and sat in the sun, and kept guard over the open shed where the trade goods were piled up, and held his peace.

Two things seemed to interest him: the flag, which he saluted night and morning to the huge amusement of the traders, and a little package that he carried, done up in a filthy rag, and tucked into an even filthier loin-cloth. Somebody noticed the little package and asked him what was in it; but he only grinned and tucked it away again. They thought it was some fetish that he carried.

They discovered, though, another interest of his when the trader gave him one morning a yard or two of calico and half a bar of soap. From that minute neither he nor his loin-cloth nor his little package were ever dirty, and he felt and showed unqualified contempt for the soldiers of the Chartered Company, who came into the *boma* occasionally to make purchases. They did not keep their side-arms clean enough for his fancy, and on the few occasions when he spoke to them, or they to him, he was overheard calling them by names that would have made a horse artillery rough-riding sergeant green with envy.

Some half animal instinct, it seemed to the traders, had set him against those soldiers of fortune. They did not know that the Sudanese tongue the soldiers spoke was one of the many languages which Lordy had incorporated in his own amazing vocabulary, and that while he sat in the sun before the shed he was drinking in the point of view and grievances of every swaggering ruffian who came into the *boma* for cigaret tobacco. They did not even know how real were the grievances, nor how keenly they were felt. But Lordy knew, because he listened; and he soon knew something else as well.

He learned that the men were soldiering on credit. Because coin is heavy, and the distance from the coast was more than seven hundred miles, no pay had come for the soldiers for something more than eighteen months. There was no money in Uganda, so perfectly efficient fighting-men who had signed on for the pay that they would get, were being paid in trade instead of cash. And that way lies mutiny.

Lordy listened to the fore-rumblings of the outbreak and noticed the open disrespect for officers pass unrebuked, and saw the flag stand unsaluted in the *boma* square —or saluted only under duress. But he held his tongue. He had seen Goglam handle unenthusiasm, and even insubordination, and he was busy trying to remember.

He could understand the language of the Sudanese much better than he could the English of the traders or the British officers; but no one paid much attention to him, so by listening attentively he learned that the white men were perfectly aware that trouble might be brewing.

And he learned, too, that in case of trouble there would be little chance of succor within five months or more. A message would have to be sent to India—wherever India was—and men would have to march across country from the sea. He had seen the sea at the Nile mouth once. He knew then where that was, and he knew how long it had taken him to traverse half the distance. He did not believe that troops could do it in a year.

He knew of only one sea, from the other side of which the Only Regiment had come, and Goglam; so perhaps India was another name for Home. These white men had a strange habit of calling one thing by a lot of different names.

He decided that if there was really to be a mutiny there would be a massacre. He had seen more than one massacre, and had been in more than one, and he failed to see how a dozen, or less, white men could hold that *boma* for more than a day against a regiment of trained soldiers. The thoughts that ran through his head scarcely shaped themselves, but the thoughts were there, and all his old instincts of obedience for obedience' sake, and loyalty for the sake of loyalty, began to boil in him.

He went off one day, without a word to anybody, and limped along nine miles of native road to where one-half of the regiment of Sudanese was camped; and there he looked over the men at drill and noticed a host of things. He had been sulky once himself, and he knew the symptoms; he

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knew what the matter was with men who scowled, and wheeled raggedly, and held their arms just anyhow at all when no officer was looking at them. And he saw that the officers neglected to behave as Goglam would have done. They overlooked things.

Then he limped for a whole day along twenty more miles of road to where the other half of the regiment was camped. They had divided it, and had built the camps to the eastward and the westward of the *boma*, in case of just such a contingency as this. While yet loyal, the regiment was perfectly effective in two divisions, but if it mutinied it would at least gain nothing by being split into widely separated detachments. It would take the two halves time to get together, and breathing-time often spells salvation in a crisis.

His second journey turned out to be wasted. When he reached the camp he saw the dead body of one officer pegged out on an anthill, and there was evidence enough that the other officers were gone. He saw, from a point of vantage in between some rocks, that the mutineers were keeping up a sort of semblance of military discipline, and that their non-commissioned officers were now in charge of them; but the whole outfit looked too much like a dervish raiding -party — ragged ruffianism, braggadocio, and noise—to tempt him to a closer view. He hid until night fell like a velvet sheet, and then limped away again, leaning on a pole and hurrying.

When he reached the *boma* it was midnight, for his strength had begun to give out and he had had to rest. He was challenged long before he reached the *boma* gate, and he heard a breech-bolt click before he heard a voice. He halted at the order; but they made him throw his hands above his head and come quite close up to the gate where they could see him, and there they kept him waiting while they talked him over.

He could see all the traders and most of the British officers from both the camps clustered all together around a watch-fire by the gate, and he could see native lookouts dotted here and there along the earthwork. He could hear, too, something of what was said. They spoke hurriedly and excitedly. They seemed to be in something of a panic. They had even forgotten to lower the flag at sunset, for he could see it still moving in the wind—an even thicker spot of blackness against the dead blackness of the night.

"WHO is he?" asked an officer, and a trader answered him:

"He's that damned old nigger who limped in here one day from nobody knows where and has drawn rations ever since."

"Know anything about him?"

"Not a thing. He's been tortured at some time or another, and I'm almost sure that he's been drilled. Only other thing that I've noticed about him is that he's never been overfriendly to the soldiers."

"Can he do anything? Work, for instance?"

"Lord, no! He's a cripple!"

"He'd be one extra to feed then, and an uncertain quantity as well. We can't afford to have anybody in here now that we don't know all about."

"I dunno!" said the trader. "I remember he——"

"Is he any use?"

"No, he's no use."

"Send him away, then."

"All right. Just as you say."

A man stepped to the gate. Lordy recognized the trader who had been the first to speak to him and to listen to his glad outburst of English. He grinned at him, never believing for an instant that he would be really sent away. But the trader's first words disillusioned him. They did even more: they staggered him and deprived him of the power of speech.

"You can't come in here. Go away!"

Lordy's grin dried up, and his mouth opened in an attempt to remonstrate. But no words came.

"Get away, you damned old nigger! You've drawn rations long enough."

Lordy still failed to understand, and still could not answer. He stood at gaze, trembling, and with his mouth wide open.

"Git! D'ye hear! Go to blazes! *Enenda zako! Voetsak!* Get out of it!"

He still stood, staring blankly at the gate; but a clod of earth broke into little pieces just beside him, as a hint that the white men were in earnest. So he moved two paces backward. Then he straightened, and his chin went up.

Something blacker than the night moved fitfully above the *boma*. He saluted it, and stood at the salute for six full seconds. Then another clod of earth burst into little

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bits beside him, and he turned like a drilled man, and the black night swallowed him.

"I dunno," said the trader, "but that damned old nigger doesn't seem somehow dangerous to me. I think he's honest."

"Rot!" said an officer. "They're all dishonest."

"Maybe," said the trader. "Still—I wouldn't bet!"

V

NO MAN can tell what mixed emotions passed through Lordy's primitive being that night, for he was a strange mixture in any case. He had no religion, beyond a smattering of Mohammedanism picked up in Cairo and seared into him with hot irons in the Mahdi camp afterward; and even that was muddled and confused by memories of a monosyllabic Deity by whom the Only Regiment had been wont to swear when things went wrong. "Allah" was an expletive; so was "God;" and both stood for condign vengeance wrought by human agency. He was decidedly not prayerful.

He lay for a long time in the six-foot grass and watched the *boma* lights and the shadows flitting past them. And as he lay he muttered:

"Dam ol' niggah— Huh!"

And then he would pull his package out, and feel it, and put it back again.

After a while he saw other lights beyond the *boma*, and heard the noise of half a regiment, half under control, taking up a position outside the *boma* wall.

"*That* dam ol' niggahs," he muttered. "Me? Huh!" And out came the cloth-wrapped package once again, to be felt and fondled, and returned.

One-half of the mutineers had made up their minds evidently to attack at once and loot the *boma* while there was yet a chance. There was ammunition in the *boma*—tons of it; Lordy had seen it there. The mutineers quite probably were short of it.

"Dam ol' niggah!" he muttered to himself again; and then he arose and limped off toward the other camp. There was nowhere else to go.

He reached it at dawn, and found the mutineers just cooking breakfast in preparation for immediate departure. There was an envoy among them from the other camp, and he was preaching blood, and rapine, and arson; Lordy had listened to that kind of oration times without number while he was the Mahdi's guest. He recognized the note, and the language, and the bloodthirsty appeal of it, and he could see that its effect was more than half produced already.

These men were first cousins to the dervishes, and although they had been drilled by white men, the white men had not been Goglams. They had had a polish put on unenlightened savagery — a thin, drill-spread veneer that was chipping off under the attentions of the big black Nubian who preached to them what they had known before.

There had been no earnest, dogged-does-it teaching, such as Goglam gave to the First Egyptian Foot; no colors that they might be taught to rally 'round; no talk of honor for the sake of honor. There had been nothing given them but bald routine, and promises of pay. And the pay had not materialized. Lordy trembled as he saw the drill veneer peel off, and sensed the savagery.

But he went into the camp and asked for breakfast, and they gave it him. They knew that he had lived for months past in the *boma*, and they thought that he might have useful information. They could see, too, the marks of dervish torture on him; and these reminded them that there are more ways than merely charitable ones of winning information. They fed him full, and pointed to his scars, and asked him questions. The swaggering bully from the other camp stood over him and asked him, for one thing, whether it were not true that the white men in the *boma* were panic-stricken. And Lordy rose, and leaned on his pole, and answered him.

"'Fraid?" he said. "They same afraid as me!"

The Nubian grinned and touched him on the wrist, where a dervish thong had tightened once until the flesh twisted and festered from the bone. And then he repeated the question in whip-lash Arabic, with his fierce eyes fixed straight on Lordy's, and every line of his attitude a studied menace. But Lordy had no use just now for Arabic; he was back in the spirit to the days when he had sweated for Goglam's sake to make a point of ethics clear to raw recruits, and the jargon he had used then was the proper medium now.

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"What dam right you dam niggah gotta say talk-back?" he demanded angrily, rising to his full height and letting go the pole.

He stood six inches taller than the Nubian now, and there was fire in his eye.

"Who are you? Dam black mummy-man!"

His chest swelled, as it once had done in Egypt, and his broad old back grew straight. The mutineers stood around him in a cluster as once the raw recruits had done, and he could almost hear the voice of Goglam, tipping him off in undertones and waiting for him to translate.

"Dam black *malaish wallah!* Say, 'Nevah mind,' eh? 'All same bimeby,' eh? Eat plenty — drink plenty — plenty woman — plenty smoke—plenty sleep—plenty don't-care-a-dam; plenty regiment go to devil, eh?"

They none of them knew yet what he was driving at, but the Nubian appeared discomfited, and that is always an attraction to the savage; they felt quite disposed to let him have his say. Besides, he was evidently preaching; and a nation that breeds fanatics breeds men who will always listen to a preacher, whether they mean to adopt his theories or not. They may crucify him for it afterward, but they will listen.

"Who are you?" demanded Lordy. "Dam black niggah private! Huh! What dam right you gotta say talk-back?"

There was a soldier close at hand who was busy pulling on his military woolen jumper—the gray sweater with the leather shoulder-pads that all British native troops in Central Africa are made to wear. Lordy pushed him, and upset him, and seized the sweater; and the crowd laughed. He had won point number one, for the crowd laughed with him, and at the other man. He pulled the sweater on.

"*Malaish?*" he snorted. "No matter, eh? Huh! Pay—that *malaish!* Food—that *malaish!* Sleep—rest—bimeby that all *malaish!* See heah — you dam black——"

He reeled off an outrageous string of combination swear-word epithets, not one of which had the smallest hint of other than damnation in it. And then he drew out his little package and unwrapped it carefully, and disclosed a silver medal. And he pinned it on the sweater with the air of a man who has sworn a vow and will march off presently to prove himself *à l'outrance.*

They clustered around him closer, but he waved them back.

"That not *malaish!*" he told them. "No bleedin' black cannibal recruit touch that!"

"Where did you get it?" asked the Nubian in Arabic.

"From the Army!" answered Lordy proudly. "Huh! You got one? Culuh-sergeant, me! You what?"

THE Nubian looked very closely at the medal. It bore a woman's face, and lettering around the rim; he had seen such medals on British soldiers, and he knew their meaning. The others asked the Nubian what the medal was, and what it meant, and he had to tell them that it stood for service rendered. After that they shouldered the Nubian bully to the outside of the crowd, and squatted in rings round Lordy, and let him talk to them. He at least would have a tale that was worth the hearing.

The medal did not do it, nor the sight of it, nor the wondrous tales he wove around it. It was what the medal did for Lordy that won the day for him. As it shone there on the borrowed sweater on his breast, he could catch the glint of it, and feel the weight of it as it rose and fell above his heaving bosom. And that, and the voice of Goglam whispering to him—for his memory was away back now to the early days—gave him eloquence and fire.

He told them, as Goglam had ~~once~~ told him, of what a regiment meant, and what honor meant, and what were the wages of dishonor. He told it in a language that would have shamed a Billingsgate fish porter, and would have needed three dictionaries at least to trace its origin; but it was forceful, and direct, and true, and in the end he won them.

First, three men grunted their approval; then a dozen. Then the Nubian arose and tried to interfere and change the tide, but they threw the Nubian down again, and when he fought they tied him.

Then Lordy sensed the crisis, and his eye began to wander until it rested on a bugler. He pounced on the bugler, and seized him by the neck, and dragged him to his feet.

"The rally!" he ordered. "Sound the rally!"

He had heard Goglam give that order at Khartum, and had seen the result of it.

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"Blow!" he ordered. "Blow your guts out!"

And the well-known strident bugle-call ripped out—the best part of an octave flat, but loud enough to wake a regiment of dead men.

"Now, the 'Fall in!' "

And again the bugle rang, and they fell in, in two long lines. The day was won!

He numbered them—

"One two—One two!" (Counting is not their long suit down in Africa, and the main point is to get them odd and even.)

And then he formed them into fours. All the old words of command came back to him, and so did the shadow of the same old swaggering stride, for all his limp. He ordered their six great war drums out to the front of them, and filled his lungs, as he used to do in Egypt, for a real, rip-roaring, sergeant-major shout, and—

"Slope—Umms!" he ordered. "By companies—numbah one leadin'—move to the right in foahs— Quick—march! By the right!— Left wheel!"

The war drums thundered, and the earth resounded to the tramp of them. There was something new about them that none of them had ever known before, and they marched as men who have a purpose. But their march and their mien were as nothing to the limp of the bare-legged, sweatered scarecrow at their head, who threw his breast out to let the medal glitter more, and led them—in silence now, for he had said the whole of what was in him—straight for the beleaguered *boma*. He was the proudest thing in Africa.

VI

THE half regiment that was hammering at the *boma* hammered in earnest. The native soldiers were just as conscious as the white defenders that relief, if it ever came at all, was at least five months away. They had time in which to do their business, but as the easiness of the task in front of them became more obvious the extent of their intentions grew.

They had sent an envoy to the other camp, and they had sent, too, glib-tongued apostles to the native villages, to rouse the Waganda to their aid. They expected help at any moment, but they could not wait for it. What had been, but a day ago, a mutiny for pay that was overdue, was now a revolt. They would found an empire of their own, with a king of their own, and laws and license and debauchery entirely of their own, and they would begin with blood and bayonets at once.

So, the eight-and-twenty in the *boma*—eleven white men and their native servants—fought grimly from the dawn until the mutineers drew off again, to count their dead and bandage up their wounded. Four hundred roared to the attack at daybreak; and three hundred and thirty-one formed up again at noon to tell each other that the cost was immaterial, and to nerve each other for a new assault. There were still eight-and-twenty in the *boma;* but their rifle barrels burnt their fingers, and their gray gills told of desperation, and of fear that the end was very close.

And then war drums thundered from beyond the rising ground to eastward, and the shouting ceased. The other half of the regiment was coming.

The mutineers drew off a little farther and lay down beside their arms to rest. They would wait until their friends formed up opposite the eastern gate, and then would send a messenger to them, and arrange an assault from two sides at once. It was all over now except the rush, and the cold steel, and the shouting.

And, inside the *boma*, the white men held a hurried consultation.

"Can you see them?" asked the trader.

An officer, perched high up on a roof-top, peered through his glasses anxiously.

"They're all there!" he answered. "And by gad! You know that damned old nigger that we kicked out of here? He's leading 'em! I can see him limping along ahead of them, behind the drums! It's the same man beyond a doubt! There's your honest nigger for you!"

"Well—never mind," said the trader. "He won't make much difference. Where are they heading for?"

"Straight toward the gate."

"That means we're going to catch it from two sides at once! Well— Good-by, you men. We'd better hold our present stations until they get right in—then rally 'round the flag-pole, and take what's coming to us there. That agreed?"

"Why not make it the bungalow?"

"Oh, what's the use? It'd only prolong the agony. Let's die in the open!"

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"One minute!" said the man in khaki on the roof-top. "Just one minute! There's something here I don't quite understand."

They waited in tense silence while he watched still through his glasses. On the far side of the little square six white men kept their eyes fixed on the mutineers, who were resting on their arms. They were still resting, but they had sent one of their number running to the newcomers. He was making a wide circuit around the *boma*.

One of the defenders fired at him and missed. He ran all the faster, but he turned for a second and shook his fist at the defenders, and shouted something that they could not catch. He could see the advancing soldiers now; the men who had sent him, though, could not, for the *boma* lay exactly in between.

"They're coming straight on!" said the officer. "They're marching at the slope, in good formation; and they've got one man with them who's a prisoner by the look of it—he's marching at the rear, between two others, and his hands are tied behind him! Here they come— Look!"

As he spoke, the Sudanese, with Lordy at the head of them, swung out past a ridge of rising ground, and slightly changed direction. The messenger reached them, and began to shout and argue. The man who limped and led gave an order and made some kind of motion. Two men left the ranks and threw the messenger, and one man drove a bayonet home into his stomach.

"Did you see that?" asked the officer.

"What did they do that for?"

"Heaven knows!"

The nearer and the nearer that the new arrivals came to the *boma*, the more nearly invisible they were to the men who waited for them in the hollow on the farther side. Their war drums never for an instant ceased their thundering, and the column never paused nor seemed to hesitate; but when they came within what might be rifle range, the scarecrow in the lead produced a piece of calico and tied it to a stick and waved it. But they made no other sign; they marched straight on, with chins erect, and rifles at the slope still.

"White flag? They're friends, then?"

"Bah! It's a ruse!"

"Then why did they kill that messenger? Tell me that!"

"Go down and open that gate, somebody!"

"Not yet. Why, man, it's surely a trick to rush us!"

"I don't believe it. And, after all, what's the odds? If they're friends, well and good; and if they're not, the end'll come just that much sooner."

"Challenge 'em first, and see."

"Halt!" yelled some one near the gate. "Halt! Who comes there?"

But there was neither answer nor attempt at answer; only the white flag waved again, and the column marched straight on.

"Let's fire a volley over their heads."

"And start the others? That'll be just what they're waiting for. The moment they hear a shot fired, they'll come on with a rush."

"Well—what's the answer?"

"Open the gate, I say!"

"Anybody care?"

Nobody did care apparently, for no one spoke. After all, it did not matter very much.

Two native servants were sent down to the gate, and they held it wide open, while half of the white men held their fingers on their triggers by the bungalow that faced the gate, and the other half still watched the mutineers on the far side.

And on came the Sudanese behind their drums, neither speaking nor breaking rank, but crunching the earth together with a steady quickstep swing that kept time to the six big sheepskins.

They challenged Lordy as he reached the gate, but he did not answer them. They challenged him again as he passed in through it; but he still made no answer. He limped on with his chin erect, and his chest thrown out like a pouter pigeon's, and his silver medal gleaming on it.

"What medal's that he's got?" asked some one.

"Lord knows!"

"Halt, there! Where are you going to?"

But there was no answer. The thundering of the drums continued, and the half regiment with its prisoner behind it marched in, until the last file of all had passed the gate and it was closed again behind them. And still Lordy led them on, until the middle of the line was abreast the flag-pole. Then——

"Ha—ult!" he roared; and——

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"Front!"

And then he limped to where the colonel of a regiment should stand—in front of it. His eyes were gleaming with an almost religious fire.

"Ri— Dress!" he ordered.

"Shuller—Umms!"

Then he looked across his shoulder, and filled his lungs again, and raised himself almost on tiptoe for the final effort:

"Ryle—Schloot——Pee—sent—Umms!"

A swift, sharp movement played down the length of the two long lines, and half a regiment, with a medaled scarecrow at its head, presented arms to the flag that it had flouted but a day ago.

There was neither sound nor movement for six seconds, while the white men in the *boma* stood and stared, and the Sudanese did homage.

"Shuller—Umms!" commanded Lordy.

"Ordah—Umms!"

Then he stood there at attention, and waited; and then the trader walked up to where he stood, and tapped him on the breast, and smiled at him.

"What does this mean?" he asked Lordy pleasantly.

"Aw presunt-an'-correct-suh!" answered Lordy, remembering how Goglam had behaved when the Colonel of the First Egyptian Foot had come to look the regiment over.

Then his stiffness relaxed a little, and something that was very near resentment flashed across his face.

"Dam ol' niggah!" he muttered half aloud. "Huh!"

VII

THE Waganda did rise to the assistance of the mutineers, and for five months, while relief was coming all the long way from India, little scattered detachments of white men and loyal natives held out desperately against tremendous odds. But Lordy had saved the day. For, with half a regiment inside the *boma*, and that half loyal, the British were able to keep the main, drilled body of the mutineers too busy to be more than merely dangerous; and when the Sikhs arrived they found the flag still flying.

And then came the last, if not least of all the wonders that were fated to befall Lordy. There was another medal for him—another silver portrait of an Empress he had never seen, and whose name he did not even know. His full name and title were engraved deep on the rim of it, and they read it to him—Color-Sergeant Lordy Liverus, First Egyptian Foot!

And he was satisfied.

The rest was graft in his opinion—good graft—comfortable graft—loot, as he understood it, from the mutineers. He had to go once each month, on the first day of the month, to the *boma*, and make his cross on a piece of paper. They called the thing a "pinshan," or so he said; and it totaled up to two pounds English, or thirty good rupees per month!

So Lordy, who was nothing but a "damned old nigger," knew in the end as much as any man about the sowing of the seed of empire, and the tilling, and the harvest of it.

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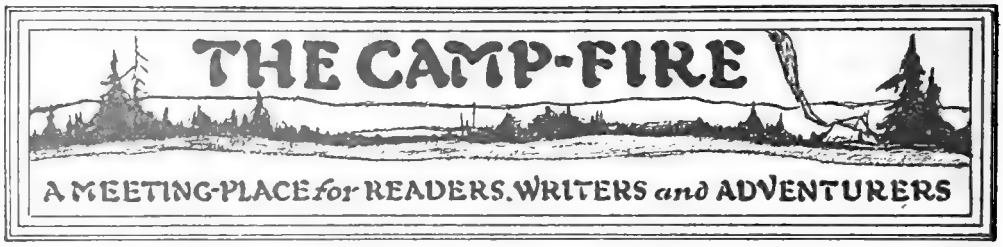

ANOTHER letter from our comrade Edmond C. C. Genet, American airman serving with the French. The man he mentions is another American, fighting in another unit but, at last reports, hoping to join the French flying-corps.

I'VE been exceptionally rushed ever since November in completing my training at Pau and in getting ready to join our escadrille at the front. I left Pau about the middle of the month, spent a few days in Paris on leave and am now here at a reserve camp for pilots ready for the front. I expect to leave at least by next week.

I'M COMPLETELY finished with my training now and am a full-fledged French military *pilote de chasse*. I'll pilot a Nieuport at the front and be one of the fighters of the aerial force. It sounds fine to me. I've been away from the front ever since last May and I'm decidedly anxious to get back—particularly as getting back means flying over those lines and being able to do my little bit in the air.

Whether I go to Rumania or not will be decided later on. Just at present I'm out for this front with our escadrille and will think more of going to the Eastern front next Spring.

I'll keep my mind on—— and if we meet, as I hope we will, I'll surely be mighty glad to shake hands with him for you as well as for myself.

"FINISHED" ends in this issue and, as many of you know, *Allan Quatermain* himself is dead, killed in action against the Germans in East Africa a little over two months ago. His real name was Captain Frederick Courtney Selous, a mighty hunter, a brave man, with sixty-five years of splendid life for his monument. We of the Camp-Fire rise to salute him as he passes.

And we must rise again to the salute, for another famous man, a member of our own Camp-Fire, has taken the Long Trail. The death of the famous Boer leader, General Benjamin Johannis Viljoen, has been announced in the newspapers of the world and the wonderful story of his life needs no retelling here. He has spoken to us at our Camp-Fire and in the pages of the magazine. I am glad to say that we have an unpublished chapter of his life written for us by him and destined for a future issue of the magazine. It will be the voice of a dead comrade.

Some of you knew him personally. I never had that pleasure, but our acquaintance by letter was, to me, both pleasant and extremely interesting. May the Trail be sweet to his feet.

SOME of you may have sent a question to an "Ask Adventure" editor and wondered why you received no answer. The explanation is probably a very simple one—you did not enclose a stamped and self-addressed envelope as is required. If you don't follow the rules of "Ask Adventure" you can't be given its free service. The rules mean what they say.

"CAMP-FIRE" has to go to the printer so far ahead of our date of publication that it sometimes makes an item sound strange because of changes in events between the two dates. Sometimes I can not bring up a subject because it is likely to be no longer timely by the day it reaches you in print.

Today, as I write, the United States is waiting. The German ambassador has been sent home. War seems almost, but not quite, certain. How can I speak now, not knowing what will happen before April?

I am glad that, on some of the vital points, I have already said my say at our Camp-Fire and that my beliefs are the same that nearly all of you hold. Our Camp-Fire has known that our country was in danger of war and that she was unprepared. For nearly three years we have not only talked but worked for Preparedness.

I AM glad that long ago I declared against hyphenated Americans and that you stood with me. I hope that by

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April we shall have found so few American citizens of Teutonic birth or parentage who are not as good Americans as the rest of us that the hyphen problem will be forgotten. Their choice is a hard one; honor to those who are true to their oath of allegiance to this their chosen country. To the liars, perjurers and traitors who break it, the fate they deserve.

AND, whether there is war or peace by April, I say what I have often said to you before—the ultimate fate of our country lies in your hands, in mine, in the hands of each of us her citizens. If she is to be strong, good, all that we would have her be, then we must make her clean and healthy. The grafter, the self-seeker, the professional "politician," the pork-grabber, the parasite, the carrion bird, all these must be fought and defeated. There is no one in all the world to fight them except you, and me, and all the other plain, every-day American citizens who think they have no power, yet who can hold all of it.

Whether there be war or peace the great machine we call our nation must be made to run smoothly, cleanly, effectively. There are a billion tiny cogs in that machine. There are a hundred million of us engineers to look after it. If we do our duty by the tiny cogs, the machine will run well. If we shirk our duty toward the little cogs, leaving them to the grafters, the machine will *not* run well.

PEACE or war, let each one of us resolve to fight graft whenever and wherever he sees it, against any odds, without any quarter. Country first, self second. There is little "glory" in this fighting, and no reward. But the need of it is very great, and very bitter. If our country is to fight, it is not enough for us to put a weapon in her hands; her blood must be free of disease, her veins clear, her muscles hard, her heart sound and true. We must give her the weapon, but we must also give her these other things if she is to wield it well.

THE Camp-Fire mail is a heavy one and I am glad it is, for it means that, so far as separating miles permit, there is a pretty close bond of union among us. In many cases the writer tells something of his own adventures and it is a hard task to choose from so many the few we have space to print. Some, of course, are not for publication. From the remainder I confess I select more or less at haphazard. By what rules could a fellow weigh and measure these human documents?

Here is one, for example, from one who has seen much:

I WAS born in Madrid, Spain, December 4, 1857. Came to U. S. A. in 1861—May 21. Landing at Philadelphia, attended common high school there, afterward attending one of the foremost universities in the country, then spending four years at the National University at Madrid. One year I spent in Hongkong, one in Tientsin; have visited Peking, Shanghai, Calcutta, Berlin, Bremen, Paris. Lived four years in London; have seen the ships come in "gladly" and watched them, "lovingly," sail from Sydney, Melbourne, Cape Town, Bombay, Kobe, Yokohama, and longed for enough to take passage on them.

I HAVE hunted on the Zambezi, and Amazon, and followed the latter to the village of Iquitos, on the Peruvian border. Have spent several years in Mexico, surveying on the Mexican International, the Real del Monte y Pachuca Cia., the Mecaxa Power Co., and have worked for many mining companies, in this and other countries, as surveyor and mechanical engineer. Fought for Madero, at Casas Grandes, and at Ciudad Juarez, where I was in the Foreign Legion, with Garibaldi, and since Madero's demise have been more or less of a free-lance in Mexico, where I own properties and hope some day to have protection to work them.

I am just waiting here for the chance to go to Brazil and try another year at crocodile-shooting and prospecting.

My life has never held any thrills except those experiences in the *Vistas Nuevas que enquentramos, y en los personas de los piases que nos visatamos.*—LORENZO GONZALEZ.

YOU old-timers who knew the old West and the men who made it, here is another old-timer who wants to know about still others:

DO YOU think it would interest the "Camp-Fire" to hunt these lost trails? I would like to know myself. When did each die? How and where were they buried?

Jim Baker, Jim Beckwith, Bill Williams, Frank Gruard, Grizzly Adams, King Fisher, Jules (for whom Julesburg, Wyo., is named), Jim Bridger. There are many others whose names at this moment I can not recall, among others—that pardner of Bill Hickox. Yes, and Buffalo Chip, what became of him? Deaf Smith, Texan and scout for Sam Houston; the latter's Osage children, California Joe, Texas Jack.

That pardner of Beckwith's when he had the road-house or tavern on the emigrant trail; Old Storm the bear-hunter; the Riddle boys of the Nez Percé campaign. Some of the old-timers among your readers will remember others I can not recall, every one of whom helped to win the West. That civilian scout of Yuma when Crook was there in the early

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'70's. Johnny Dobbs, Arizonan. And where is Cluray buried? Colorado? Some of your pen-pushers should get valuable material in the search. Sam Householder, shot in the Piute war, railroader at sixteen. Curly, the survivor of the Custer fight. And so many more.—FRANK H. HUSTON.

THE MOST POPULAR STORIES WE PUBLISHED DURING 1916

THE results of the vote by you, our readers, for the ten most popular stories published in *Adventure* from the January, 1916, issue to the December, 1916, issue inclusive are of interest to all of us. They may be considered fairly indicative of the kinds of story our readers want. It is only fair, however, to remember that such a vote can not be a final or conclusive test.

For one thing, only a small portion of readers ever takes active part in such a vote. Second, a story published the month of the vote has an unfair advantage over a story published eleven months before, being, of course, much fresher in mind. Again, a serial or novelette because of its greater size has a big advantage over a short story. Also, though no one could vote who had not read at least five issues of 1916, many new readers joined us during the year and must be represented among the voters, thus again putting a handicap on stories published in the earlier issues.

IF A voter wished, he could give honorable mention to other stories besides the ten he considered best. Many did this, often giving a full ten additional, some of them even more than ten. Some wrote in refusing to vote because the stories were "all good." These last opinions, though appreciated, could not be registered in the returns, but we did give point-value to all honorable mentions received. Mr. Wade and I each voted his one vote along with the rest.

In case of the two we decided for the story published earlier than its rival, adding one point to its score to indicate its precedence.

22,538	(1.)	"Gaston Olaf"	Henry Oyen,	Serial (3) June-Aug.
18,144	(2.)	"Paradise Bend"	William Patterson White	Serial (4) Mch.-June
13,755	(3.)	"Beyond the Rim"	J. Allan Dunn	Novel July
13,461	(4.)	"The Story of William Hyde"	Patrick & Terence Casey	Serial (4) Dec. '15-Mch.
12,558	(5.)	"The Secret Wolf"	S. Carleton	Novel Sept.
12,180	(6.)	"Dan Wheeler, Manhandler"	John I. Cochrane, M. D.	Novel June
11,592	(7.)	"Hidden Country"	Henry Oyen	Novel Dec.
11,529	(8.)	"Silver Slippers"	Jackson Gregory	Novel Nov.
11,088	(9.)	"Yahoya"	Jackson Gregory	Novel Aug.
10,710	(10.)	"In the Grip of the Minotaur"	Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur	Serial (4) Aug.-Nov.
10,562	(11.)	"The Chase of the Four Fools"	Patrick & Terence Casey	Serial (3) Nov.-Jan. '17
10,184	(12.)	"The Iron Factor"	Kathrene & Robert Pinkerton	Novel May
9,471	(13.)	"The Signal Fire"	Dr. J. U. Giesy	Novel May
9,429	(14.)	"The Spoilsman"	Samuel Alexander White	Novel Jan.
8,988	(15.)	"The Millionth Chance"	Arthur Somers Roche	Novel Oct.
6,195	(16.)	"The Boss of Powderville"	Thomas Addison	Novel Oct.
5,838	(17.)	"Days of Morgan"	George Rothwell Brown	Novel Apl.
3,927	(18.)	"A Bull Movement in Yellow Horse"	W. C. Tuttle	Story Sept.
4,746	(19.)	"The Secret of Caprice"	Henry M. Neely,	Novel Mch.
3,823	(20.)	"Boarders Away"	Arthur D. Howden Smith	Story Feb.

You see that the short stories have been crowded clear off the board by the novelettes, novels and serials, even "Boarders Away," the shortest and last of the list, being 13,000 words long. This is decidedly a feather in the cap of the longer types, yet it is after all a rather unfair showing against the short story. Other things being equal, a tale of 30,000 to 80,000 words is bound to make a bigger impress than one of 1,500 to 10,000. Yet it is the little tales that give savor to the big ones. An issue composed of three or four long tales would be lacking in the variety and contrast the shorter ones provide. And of course there were many of you who voted short stories a higher place than long ones.

During 1916 we published 5 serials, 16 novels or novelettes, 16 stories of 10,000 to 20,000 words, 93 short stories, 3 articles, and 2 articles in a series, 135 in all. The short stories play too important a part in our year's reading not to deserve a tabulation of their own showing their place in the vote. I include with them stories of 10,000 to 20,000 words, marking with a star those that are under 10,000.

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Short Stories, and Those of 10,000 to 20,000 Words

3,927	*(1)	"A Bull Movement in Yellow Horse" W. C. Tuttle	Sept. (18)
3,823	(2)	"Boarders' Away" Arthur D. Howden Smith	Feb. (20)
3,549	*(3)	"Color Guards" Robert J. Pearsall	Dec. (22)
3,528	(4)	"The Harp on the Barbed Wire Fence" William H. Hamby	June (23)
2,982	(5)	"The Education of Billy Stream" Frederick William Wallace	July (26)
2,814	(6)	"To Crack a Safe" Patrick and Terence Casey	July (27)
2,709	*(7)	"The Marrow-Bone" S. B. H. Hurst	Jan. (28)
2,688	*(8)	"Billy June and the Man Going Out" Wilbur Hall	May (29)
2,646	*(9)	"For the Love of Annibel" W. C. Tuttle	Nov. (30)
2,626	(10)	"The Stronger Call" Robert V. Carr	Jan. (31)
2,625	*(11)	"The Man-Breaker" Hapsburg Liebe	Sept. (32)
2,164	*(12)	"When Oscar Went Wild" W. C. Tuttle	July (33)
2,163	(13)	"Heroes All" Arthur D. Howden Smith	Sept. (34)
2,079	*(14)	"Last Papers" C. L. Gilman	Feb. (35)
2,058	*(15)	"All Wool" W. C. Tuttle	Oct. (36)
1,995	*(16)	"Dory-Mates" Frederick William Wallace	Apl. (37)
1,954	*(17)	"The Receipt" S. B. H. Hurst	Aug. (38)
1,785	*(18)	"The Soul of King Throsh" James Francis Dwyer	Feb. (39)
1,764	*(19)	"Some Fishing" Frederick William Wallace	Aug. (40)
1,659	*(20)	"Taste of the Salt" S. B. H. Hurst	Oct. (41)

**Indicates stories of under* 10,000 *words.*

This second list may be taken as practically following on after the first list in order of preference, the only exceptions being that "The Ocean Borne," novel, by Samuel Alexander White, ranks as number 21, the articles "Lost Treasures of the World" (two of its three articles appeared in 1916) by Stephen Allen Reynolds rank as number 24 and the novelette "Little Erolinda," by Johnston McCulley, is number 25.

MY OWN vote does not rank the stories as they are ranked here. Neither, probably, does the vote of any particular one of you. But the returns indicate, at least in a general way, what the majority of readers prefer. And naturally it is the *majority* of its readers that a magazine must try to please. Many kind words for the magazine come in from you. Of course the ones we like best to hear are from those that like all the stories, but almost equally pleasing is the frequent statement that "Of course there are a few of the stories I don't care much for, but what doesn't please me probably pleases the next fellow."

For example, consider serials. Some readers don't like serials at all, yet the only serials published in 1916 rank away up toward the very top—1, 2, 4, 10, 12.

AND then there are "William Hyde" and "The Chase of the Four Fools," by Patrick and Terence Casey. I've never known any other story so strongly liked by some readers and so strongly disliked by other readers. Those who objected to them will note that they were liked so well and by so many readers that one of them ranks fourth for the year and the other twelfth. While another story by the same authors, of an entirely different kind, liked by many and objected to by none so far as I know, ranks only twenty-seventh.

One very striking thing appears. Some two years ago a readers' vote on kinds of story liked placed humorous stories far down the list. No humorous story gets a place from the present vote—except only and just four by W. C. Tuttle. Considering only short stories under 10,000 words, 93 during the year, Mr. Tuttle's stories rank 1, 6, 9 and 11 against all comers. "Tut" has surely done something when he gets results like that from readers who are not at all strong for humorous stories in general. And I think you'll agree it isn't only because his stories are adventurous in setting and material.

OF THE 40 stories receiving the highest votes about 26 are by writers who are more closely connected with *Adventure* than with any other magazine, who send most of their stories to us first. Some of them we found when they were unknown, some when only partly known, and they have stayed with us. Even a good part of the writers of the other 14 stories have been giving us a large share of their output.

On the other hand, of the 95 stories of all kinds *not* ranking high enough to be listed at all, about a third are by writers who appear in the best and biggest magazines of the country, for example, ten of them by writers for the *Saturday Evening Post.* But on the whole you liked "our own people" better.

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I'M PROUD of these things, not only for our magazine but for you the readers. It means that you form your own opinions and that you base your opinions on what the ore assays, not upon what other people say or think of the ore. And I think there is something still beyond that—the readers and the writers and the editors of this magazine have found the kinds of thing that all of them like to read about, have found a common interest in the strong, clean things of life and a common lack of interest in the fluff and the filth.

And along the way we've become pretty well acquainted and have managed to make what might have been a cold and formal matter a warm and friendly one. Readers and writers have helped me a thousand times, I've tried to help in return, and I know that on hundreds of occasions our writers have personally turned to and helped some reader with information or advice (*not* however, on how to become a writer). Our readers, too, "root" not only for the magazine but for our writers. And all because we like the same kind of thing and because a friendly feeling has grown up among us. May 1917 bring us more of it.

At the end of this year we'll try to have another vote on the most popular stories, so begin noting down in your memory your favorites as they appear.

WHEN the Great War in Europe is over there will be many thousands of Americans and Canadians coming home, and many other thousands who will never come. It will be a long time before the tally is complete, a long time before the fate of many will be known to family, friends and acquaintances here. Some of the men over there have told me that at the end of that adventure they will seek another. Others, for various reasons, will be delayed in getting home. Some will have no definite place to return to.

Perhaps we of the Camp-Fire can help a little in overcoming the confusion and settling doubts. Suppose each of us makes it his business to tell every returning soldier, of any nationality, that, if he wishes to announce to his scattered friends and acquaintances his safe return from the war, he can send *Adventure* his full name, with address or other identifying details, and, if there are more names than we can publish, I'll at least file them on record and we at the office will do our best to reply to any inquiries from friends or relations. Those of you who are yourselves in the trenches, tuck this away in your memories, and may you live to send in your names.

NATURALLY only a minority of the returning ones will have any need of such service, but I've been too many years here at this cross-roads of the Adventurous World not to know that there will be many cases that need exactly this thing. And there will be among the waiting many aching hearts, torn with doubt. If we can do anything to help, let's do it.

I. M. ROBINSON is the kind of American the country needs. He sees a chance to render a practical service to his country so he sets about doing it. The Government's own contributions to the defense of the country are largely merely on paper or for show, and it has to be forced by popular clamor before it does even this much. Any real progress that is made for Defense must be made by the citizens themselves, and they can be sure in advance that they will get no help from the Government if the Government can possibly manage to avoid giving it to them. It means a double task for us Americans—to invent and forge a good tool for the country to use and then to force the Government, against its will, to use it.

Too many Americans become discouraged at the prospect. Mr. Robinson refuses to be discouraged. He keeps his mind on two things only—his country and something he can and *will* do for it.

WHEN war comes it means bloodshed. When war comes to a country unprepared for it it means that same bloodshed and a lot more besides—the extra and tremendous bloodshed arising from citizens slaughtered needlessly because they are poorly equipped, poorly cared for, untrained, physically unfit. It also means national catastrophe. If war comes to us (and who can say it will not?) that catastrophe and that blood needlessly shed will be upon the heads of those responsible for our unpreparedness. But the test of war will bring to men like Mr. Robinson its reward of duty performed, of human lives, national honor, and perhaps the country itself saved instead of lost.

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You who have all your faculties, learn patriotism from a deaf man.

The following is from a letter of his to Frank H. Huston, concerning Mr. Robinson's letter to the Camp-Fire about organizing the many thousands of deaf for service in case of war:

You express some doubt as to the ability of the deaf to be soldiers on account of not being able to hear commands when given. That would be true if the deaf were scattered out among hearing soldiers. What I had in mind was for the deaf to be together and have officers who understood the sign-language of the deaf. One of the New York schools for the deaf has had military training for its pupils for twenty years or so, and if you could see them in their drills you would be surprised. They have won several competitions with hearing organizations. They also possess a band which is able to render excellent music in spite of the fact that they are deaf. Dr. Hausmann of the American Legion can vouch for this, as he told me he has heard this band pretty often.

IT IS not so much a question whether we are unfit for military work as whether we are to be deprived of our chance to be of help to the country in case of war. Secretary Baker said that there was nothing we could do in the regular army and that he thought the deaf could be of more use in civilian capacities. That may be true of some of us, but just the same there are some red-blooded deaf who will want to do something more than mere civilian work. There were a dozen or two deaf men in the Confederate armies and they distinguished themselves mostly as sharpshooters. A few of them are still living.

It is my intention to keep at it until I get some results.

WRITING in February I can not tell what will have happened by April, but at least it is sure that compulsory universal military training will be at least as much needed then as it is now. It's also probable that it will still be necessary for citizens to work hard in order to secure it for our country's protection.

Write or telegraph your Congressman and both your Senators at once. If the Chamberlain Bill providing six months' training at nineteen years of age has not already been passed on, urge your representatives in Congress to work for it. Get your friends to write or telegraph. Don't just sit around and wish. *Do* something.

Join the Universal Military Training League. Its Chicago address is Suite 1322, National Bank Bldg. Its New York address is Suite 1802, 165 Broadway. Its sole purpose is to further universal training legislation.

SOME cry out against universal service as "militarism." It's about as close to real militarism as croquet is to football. But, aside from that, which is better, to be a little "militaristic" or, some time in the next ten years, be invaded, overrun, killed and ravaged because we are a helpless pulp and very rich?

As to its being a "class measure," rot! Nothing that distributes power among the whole people, irrespective of class or condition, can prove a class measure. Its whole tend is toward real democracy. And this country needs real democracy. Make the millionaire's son and one of the rest of us live and work side by side under the same conditions and rules for half a year and it will accomplish more real democracy than will a whole library of preachment.

Also it will give our young men sounder bodies and better health and make them strive to avoid the shame of being rejected as physically unfit. Also it will teach them self-control, co-operation, efficiency.

Don't just howl "militarism" and "class." Think.

HE HAD no stamps and it can be seen why he preferred not using the mails, or trying to. So he handed the following letter, written on various scraps of paper of different kinds, to some one else and this some one else mailed it to me. It was written "somewhere in Mexico." I have altered proper names and made other minor changes or omissions for obvious reasons:

HERE I am in ——. It is a fine place; no doubt about it, but right now I'd just as soon be a few hundreds of miles away from it. I came —— near going up to the —— the other day and making a close examination of about ten little expansive Mauser bullets. My hands still tremble at the thought of it. Funny? Yes, I don't think.

For, though the sun shines bright . . . and the tall palms and banana-trees rustle pleasantly in the breeze and the . . ., yet my heart is cold, for I know that a friend of mine is to face a firing-squad in the morning and also that it is not at all unlikely that a couple of soldiers may at any moment step up to me and politely request me to accompany them to see that aforementioned friend.

OH YES, I've notified my consul, but what in blazes can a consul do when you are held "incommunicado" in a black hole 9 x 9 x 12 with a square about 6 inches one way and 4 another (heavily barred) to look out of and they may at any moment take a fancy to give you a free ticket to Kingdom Come? Consuls are at a discount in this country right now. You're wishing that I'd get

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down to what I'm going to say and be done with it. All right—here goes.

I'm sure you remember the "Plan of San Diego" don't you? A bunch of Mex. Revolutionists were to arm the Mex. and negroes in Texas and on an appointed day revolt and Mexico would have what she lost in 1847. Only a bunch of our S. S. men got on their trail and corraled the whole lot. Let me see! That must have been about a year and a half or two ago. Well, the man who hatched the whole thing out was a certain Señor Don X. He was the head of the whole business, so when the U. S. very properly made certain representations to the Mexican Government this "objectionable" person was, by order of the First Chief, imprisoned, in ——, with the whole town for his prison. And here, time hanging heavily on his hands, he began to plot again—and that is where yours truly came on the stage.

I LANDED in the town —— some three weeks or more ago—no, not broke but —— near it. I was standing on a street corner one night swearing at myself in half a dozen different languages one after the other. (I can swear in many languages which I can not speak.) When I swore in French, a young fellow in uniform, whom till then I had not noticed, accosted me with "*Mais monsieur, parlez-vous français?*"

Luckily I did, so we opened diplomatic relations, retired to a cantina and became fast friends. He was, it appeared, an under-lieutenant in the Carranzista army. For the present he was attached to the —— at —— where Gen. Don G. holds forth.

AS I HAD nothing else to do (I was, and still am, hunting for a job), I knocked around with my friend day and night brushing up on my French and adding to my Spanish. Several times when I had good prospects of getting employment my friend, Subteniente L., just begged me to hold back, saying that in a few days more, if I'd just hold on, we'd be rolling in wealth and could go together and adventure where we pleased. So I "held on."

Many times while I knew him he went to see this man Señor Don X.—had many long talks and always came away from the house with an exalted sort of a look on his face. What they talked about I *didn't* know at the time, though I can now form a pretty good idea. You see, my Spanish is somewhat limited and, though present at many interviews, I had great difficulty in understanding what was said; for which I now thank my lucky star.

ONE night, about a week ago, my friend L. casually asked me whether I could handle a machine gun, whereat I was much disgusted as I thought I had taken particular pains to explain to him on a former occasion that I could. He followed this up by asking me whether I'd be willing to accompany him on a little jaunt that night, saying that we'd not be out later than two o'clock.

I had a corking good headache that evening and was broke and feeling blue, so I declined. He urged me to go, but I stood pat and went to my room to sleep.

WELL, I since call that the "sleep of the innocent." You see, next morning L. didn't show up for breakfast, which didn't bother me as he was most irregular in his habits. But when he was missing for the rest of the day I began to worry a little.

I began to make inquiries here and there—even went to the ——. Everybody smilingly disclaimed knowing anything whatsoever about him. I had the sort of feeling a person gets when everybody else is in on some kind of a joke and you're out in the cold. I was annoyed but continued my search.

I FINALLY found an officer whom I had previously met and who spoke some French, and he "did a tale unfold." I had made a "raise" and paid for the drinks. It seems that Don X. had gotten a following of officers and noncoms from the local garrison; had bribed the guard of the ——, ——, —— and the —— and had everything ready to murder General G. and a few other persons who were most inconveniently living. He was furthermore going to rob the aforesaid —— of fifty-five thousand pesos *plata*, the —— of some thirty thousand pesos in silver, gold and American bills. The plan was then to beat it to the States, the money having been divided, and start a propaganda in the border States for a revolution to include the negroes and Mexicans.

Did you ever hear of such a crack-brained scheme? You'd imagine that a man who had wits enough to plan the robbery of some forty-five thousand dollars would have sense enough to know the idiocy of planning a revolution in the States.

WELL, to make a long story short, at their meeting-place the night I was invited to accompany L. (the same night they were to pull off this stunt) the whole bunch was captured by a company of soldiers who'd been waiting for them. The General's S. S. men had discovered the plot just forty-eight hours beforehand.

Now, the prison holds twenty-eight men who are waiting to be shot.

My friend L. was the second in charge of the whole business. I am, therefore, a rather suspicious character for the present; however, I'm hoping to live that down. You see, this is still a nice little country— full of "plague, murder and sudden death." Well, I'll stop for a while.

—— —— ——

A QUESTION to the Camp-Fire from an Hawaiian comrade:

Perhaps some of the Camp-Fire group can tell me— Who were the Sawaiorii? My grandfather spoke of them as a tribe of eighth-century Mabayan sea-rovers who came from the west and promoted the spirit of internesian travel in the Pacific. They are supposed to have left traces of their "Kultur" in the advanced peoples of Samoa, Tuamotu, Hawaii, etc., as differentiated from the aboriginal negroid Carolinians or Australians.

Not a few of us Hawaiians wish that an author who knows our romances and histories, like the late Mr. London, would write a good historical romance of our own people and here is the chance —Malayan Vikings, thousand-mile trips in "proa," sword-play, and love. White man and island girl, dominance of the Anglo-Saxon, and "Yaaka Hula" stuff barred! Remember, in Hawaii they would be called Hawaiioui, in Tahitian—Tafaiori. If

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any one knows real history, let him enlighten us.

HAROLD PAHALAPU, New York.

P. S. Were Curé and Laysan Islands inhabited when first discovered by white men? Was Midway Island?

WHEN you use "Ask Adventure" or any of the following free services, please observe the rules.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure's* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card—not* in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

A free department for the benefit of those readers who wish to buy or sell back copies of this magazine.

Our own supply of old issues is exhausted back of 1915; even 1915 is partly gone. Readers report that *Adventures* can almost never be found at second-hand book-stalls. Our office files are, of course, complete and we do not buy back copies or act as agents for them.

Wants: 1911, July; 1912, Feb., Aug.; 1914, June, July. State price.—DR. LOUIS C. MULLIKIN, 167 Hillside Ave., Newark, N. J.

Will sell: 1911, except Apl., May, June, Dec.; 1912, except Feb., Mch., July, Aug., Sept.; 1913, except Aug., Dec.; 1914, 1915, 1916, all complete; 1917, Jan., Feb. Best offer. Carriage extra.—H. MALONEY, Bank Bldg., Coatesville, Pa.

Wanted: 1915, Jan., Feb., Mch.; 1912, all.—J. D. TUNNELL, M. D., Reger, Mo.

Will sell: 1915, July to Dec., inclusive; 1916 complete.—FRANK W. LOOMIS, P. O. Box 226, Plymouth, Mich.

Will sell: 1910, Nov., Dec.; 1911, except Feb., Mch., July; 1912, except Jan., Feb., Mch.; 1913, Jan., Feb., Mch. $3.45.—E. J. VIGNERON, 95 Edwin St., Ridgefield Park, N. J.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use only a very few fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

ADVENTURERS' CLUB—No connection with this magazine, but data will be furnished by us. Can join only by attending a meeting of an existing chapter or starting a new chapter as provided in the Club's rules.

ORDER OF THE RESTLESS—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. Entirely separate from Adventurers' Club, but, like it, first suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 542 Engineers Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

CAMP-FIRE—Any one belongs who wishes to.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CAMP ASS'N—Military and industrial training and camps for boys 12 or over. Address 1 Broadway, New York City.

HIGH-SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS OF THE U. S.—A similar organization coöperating with the N. S. C. A. (above). Address EVERYBODY'S, Spring and Macdougal, New York City.

RIFLE CLUBS—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of every six or seven inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue or the one—or possibly two—following it.

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Ask Adventure — A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for ADVENTURE MAGAZINE by a Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, but no question answered unless stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1

FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE, *Canadian Fisherman*, 35 St. Alexander St., Montreal, Can. ★ Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; *especially*, seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to laws, customs and conditions local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Wallace.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N.Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2

HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Western U. S. Part 1

E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

7. Western U. S. Part 2

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

8. North American Snow Countries. Part 1

C. L. GILMAN, 708 Oneida Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

9. North American Snow Countries. Part 2

S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. ★ Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations.

10. North American Snow Countries. Part 3

GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. ★ Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

11. North American Snow Countries. Part 4

ED. L. CARSON, Clear Lake, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game; minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

12. North American Snow Countries. Part 5

THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 805 Jackson St., Santa Clara, Calif. Covering Alaska. Life and travel: boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

13. Central America

EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

14. The Balkans

ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

15. Asia, Southern

GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 Nagle Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

16. Japan and Korea

ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

17. Russia and Eastern Siberia

A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Lieut.-Col. II. R. A., Ret.), Adventurers' Club, 26 N. Dearborn St., Chicago. Covering Petrograd and

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached.)*

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its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

18. Africa. Part 1

CAPTAIN FREDERICK J. FRANKLIN has left this country and this department is closed until another expert is found.

19. Africa. Part 2

THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

Quartermasters

Question:—"Would you be kind enough to tell me what the requirements are for quartermaster on an American merchantman, and how long it would take to become a quartermaster, if starting as a cadet on a mail ship?"—ROBERT WALDO, New York.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—I think the status of a quartermaster in merchant steamers may best be defined as a sort of "middle class" of the sea. His chief duties are steering, and only quartermasters keep a wheel in steamers that carry them. Besides their "trick," quartermasters have the care of wheel-house and bridge generally, attending the watch officer in such duties as making signals, reading the log, and taking water temperatures and specific gravity, etc. While strictly speaking not officers, nor even petty officers, they are still a cut above the A. B's, and enjoy exemption from many of the unpleasant duties of shipboard life. They have, if they wish to exercise it, the opportunity of learning much of the higher branches of the profession which will assist them materially if they aim at a license and the resulting officer's berth. Starting as a cadet, at, say, sixteen years of age, a young man may easily obtain his second mate's license by the time he's twenty, and he'll probably be rated quartermaster before that. All depends upon himself and his application to his work. He might just as well aim first of all at the officer's berth, though, as I have said, the sooner he gets rated quartermaster, the sooner he'll be free of the less agreeable duties of his embryo stage.

The Hudson's Bay Region

Question:—"Is it practicable for a man without previous experience to go into the Northwest Territory or the Hudson's Bay Region of Canada during the cold months and live there? What equipment is necessary and what are the hunting and trapping opportunities of these districts? Could you refer me to some book or publication that can inform me on any of these topics?"—M. W. BOWER, Toledo, O.

Answer, by Mr. Gilman (note present division of Canadian territory among our Departments):—Yes, provided he has sufficient means to employ a local guide and helper to show him how.

There is much game and fur at many points in the region you designate, but you must not think that it can be found everywhere. There are large regions almost devoid of animal life. In the southern parts the taking of fur and game is limited by the game laws of the various provinces. Over nearly all of it custom has divided the territory among the natives, and trespassing is a risky business. While the traveler is allowed to take game for his subsistence, any attempt to squat and run a trap-line without permission from the trapper to whom the district belongs would be illadvised.

A good supply of dollars, U. S. or Canadian, is the best form of equipment. It is the most easily transported. Every district has its peculiar problems and its own way of meeting them. You can outfit most efficiently at the supply point nearest the district you propose to enter. The storekeepers there can give you the best advice as to what is required. Many items, particularly such essentials as Hudson's Bay blankets and eider-down quilts, are cheaper in Canada than in the U. S. Unless a man already has a woods outfit which experience has proved efficient he will do best to save his money until he has a chance to see what the "natives" use and to copy their equipment.

For a general idea of the snow-country, its hazards and its methods, I suggest you get from your public library such books as "The Forest" and "The Silent Places," by Stewart Edward White; "The Lure of the Labrador Wild" and "The Long Labrador Trail," by Dillon Wallace; "Trails, Trappers and Tenderfeet," by Stanley Washburn; and "The Conquest of the Northwest," by Agnes C. Laut. All these are readable and reliable.

Of technical hand-books I would strongly recommend "Camp Cookery," by Horace Kephart, and "Packing and Portaging" by Dillon Wallace, both in the Outing Handbook Series; "Canadian Wilds," by Martin Hunter, and "Land Cruising and Prospecting," by A. F. Wallace, *Hunter-Trader-Trapper*, Columbus, Ohio.

"Woodcraft for Women," by Kathrene Gedney Pinkerton, a late addition to the Outing Handbook Series, seems a strange book to recommend to a man. I have not seen it yet, but if it has been carried along the lines originally outlined by Mrs. Pinkerton, it should be about the best thing in print on Winter clothing and quite as valuable to a man as to a woman for the simple reason that Mrs. Pinkerton's real message is that there is no such thing as "woman's woodcraft" but that her pleasure and comfort in the woods depend upon her dressing and working exactly like a man.

I hesitate to recommend reading of the sportsmen's publications. Not that they are unreliable, but because they contain the advice of so many men of such divergent views that the novice is likely to accept as gospel what is really the expression of an extreme view of one side of an argument. The man

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who has time to read all of them for at least a year before making up his mind could find no better guide, but the beginner is likely to absorb more prejudice than information from any single copy.

However, with exceptions, I will recommend to you "Cold Weather Clothing," by Howard A. Giddings, in *Outing* for January. The exceptions are that I would sweat myself sick at 30 below if I piled on half of the total number of garments he recommends; that the army riding-breeches pictured in the illustrations are at once colder when it is cold and warmer when it is warm than plain long pants, and that the buckled leather snow-shoe harness shown is inefficient in rough-woods going and dangerous to life and limb. This shows you, as well as anything could, how "authorities" disagree on nearly every point. His stag shirt, cruising shirt and parka are very valuable and they are all garments which I would recommend.

In general: I do not wish to seem to discourage you or any man who wants to make a break for the woods. That you want to go is the best possible proof that you can make good there. Love of the woods is the foundation of woodcraft. Woodcraft is a profession not one whit less complex than law or medicine. Too many folks seem to think it is a mere form of day labor, which can be practised by anybody with a strong back and a bone head.

The complete woodsman is the product of a course of study quite the equivalent, in time and diversity, of a grade school, high school and college curriculum. I do not say this in the way of discouragement, but simply to show you how you should go about obtaining your end. Just as a mature man can run through the grammar grades in as many months as it takes years for a child, so a grown man, with a leaning toward the woods, can make himself reasonably adept in a single year—if he first realizes what there is for him to learn. The books I have suggested give you this information. The woods themselves must be your actual school.

There are two ways to get this: First, hit the Far North with sufficient cash to hire guides and play "tourist" until you have learned from them the rudiments of woodcraft; second, tackle the near-north of northern Michigan, Wisconsin or Minnesota or southern Ontario. There you will not be so far from "civilization" but that you can back out of a situation beyond your powers. If you are strong, and not too proud to work, the logging-camps, road construction and other rough labor always offer you the opportunity to make a stake if your woods venture fails to be self-supporting. The "Near North" is the best preparatory school for the "Far North."

No question is answered unless all rules are complied with.

A Mississippi River House-Boat

Question:—"I own a house-boat on the river here, 40 ft. long, 14 ft. wide, with enough engine to push it up-stream. If I understand your 'Cabin Boat Primer' right, I must write to the Mississippi River Commission at St. Louis about river maps. What shall I write for? I would like maps covering the Mississippi and every one of its tributaries, showing channel, lights, landings, etc. I want to read up ahead of hand—please sight me on any book. Also, how about Game Laws?"—Frank Howard, Cincinnati.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Write and ask the Mississippi River Commission, St. Louis, Mo., for a list of their publications and maps. They issue several kinds. The Inch to the Mile series for the Mississippi River is most convenient; they cost 5 cents each for Upper River (45 maps), 10 cents for Lower River (38 maps), including cover, title-page and I, II, III, index. Lower Alluvial Valley, 8 sheets, $3.25, by the Commission, shows the bottoms and streams. Perhaps the best you can do for the Ohio is such topographic maps (Geological Survery, Washington, D. C.) as have been printed, showing the Ohio. Get the latest report of the Mississippi River Commission, and if you obtain the Report of Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army, it contains the Commission Report, and much information about the various rivers. Your congressman, if he would, could obtain all these publications for you.

For the Game Laws, write to Department of Agriculture Washington, D. C. (Dr. Palmer), and ask for pamphlets relating to Game Laws; to Bureau of Fisheries, Washington, for Fish Laws; I am not sure but you will have to write to State capitals, (Game and Fish Protectors) for fish laws. The Lighthouse Board office, in Cincinnati, will give you a list of River Lights on Mississippi Basin streams. Write to Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., for catalogues of Mississippi River documents.

Read the five rules of "Ask Adventure" before asking a question.

Mining in the West

Question:—"I am what you might call a roamer; have seen lots of Eastern Coast. Have been to all big cities east of Mississippi. Have worked in the copper mines around the Great Lakes, in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. I have been thinking of going West for some time. What I would like to know is how much chance a white fellow has for making good in the mineral line out there? I have heard lots of talk about Nevada."—Clifton Stagnez, Hollyoak, Delaware.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—The miners on this coast are well paid. There are still many who are making a living by independent mining on a small scale. They go into the mountains where mineral is commonly known to be found, prospect till they hit pay dirt and then put up a cabin and stick as long as the claim pays. Some make good wages, some small, a very few make a stake.

I would advise any man who thinks of trying this mode of earning a living to go to some mining-camp in the vicinity he most wished to live in, get work for some company, learn the ores of that section and all he could about the lay of the land before he struck out for himself. Arizona is now working her copper mines to full capacity, as copper is high. I am reliably informed that any competent miner can get employment readily there. Bisbee is headquarters in copper.

Nevada is one grand, big aggregation of minerals, but is not yet in the same class with Arizona in development. I know many men who have mined in both States and in California with good success. As you probably know, prospecting is a gamble with the cards stacked against you most of the time, but there is still much good land not staked.

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

STETTLER, LLOYD, last heard of in Winnipeg, Can. Native of Fresno, Calif. Been in U. S. Navy but has been following mining and hard-rock work in Alaska and the northwest. Age 25 years, height 5 ft. 10 inches, weight 180 lbs., blue eyes, brown hair. Has a star tattooed on back of left hand, and a dimple in his chin. There is financial news for him concerning the Aurora mine at Dawson, Y. T. Any one knowing of his whereabouts notify his wife.—Address MRS. HELEN STETTLER, Nome, Alaska, or JAMES BARRET, Hotel Butler, Seattle, Wash.

TOBISEN, CHARLES J.; last heard of in Dodge City, Kansas, in 1901 or 1902. Any one having any knowledge as to his whereabouts please write.—Address J. H. ISBISTER, P. O. Box 88, Fort Bayard, N. M.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

JEWELL, JOHN H., or relations. John Jewell married Laura Kirkham in Guilford, Conn., Oct. 16, 1853, and was last heard of in Texas. He was a native of England, a seafaring man, and made trips to the West Indies. Heard he finally settled in Texas and was engaged in ranching. Any information greatly appreciated. — Address GEORGE K. JEWELL, 34 East Brown St., West Haven, Conn.

POOL, MYRTLE; last known residence at Washington Courthouse, Ohio, leaving there in about the year 1912. Have not heard from her since. Any information appreciated by her friend.—Address MARY E. W. LINN, 9004 Beckman Avenue, Southeast, Cleveland, Ohio.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

HOFFMAN, A. F.; left home ten years ago and went North. Last letter we received he was coming home because his brother Joe was dying. He lived with his parents at 1617 Oregon St., Berkeley, Calif. Please write your mother.—Address MRS. H. M. HOFFMAN, 1740 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, Calif.

STEBBINS, CHARLIE, medical student from Wisc. Last seen in Savannah, Ga. Tried to enter British hospital corps but gave up attempt. Born in New York. 23 years, and exceptionally good dancer. Canadian papers please copy.—Address H. R. BOWMAN, 1065 Franklin St., Johnstown, Pa.

MAUK, STANLEY M.; formerly student at Dartmouth College; last known address Toledo, O. Was on ill-fated treasure hunt of Sir Arthur Fayerweather Stockdale on board *Wylee Girl* in 1915. Last heard of headed for China. Disappeared in May, 1916. 5 ft. 8 in., 135 lbs., dark complexion, brown eyes, lobe of left ear missing. Known as "Black Stan" and "Jacko Flyer." All is O. K., Stan. Pals of the Bagley Club and old messmate "Weasel" O'Gorman would like to hear from you.—Address R. W. Dunning, Bidwell House, Hanover, N. H.

CLYMER, CHAS. A.; (son) disappeared from home on August 30, 1916. Was a seaman in the navy, serving one enlistment and all except eleven months of a second, when he purchased his discharge. Went on board steamship *St. Louis* for several trips abroad, then returned to this city where he obtained a position in boiler-shop of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Blue eyes, brown hair, 5 ft. 6 in., 20 years. One mark of identification is a large scar across his arm on the inside of the elbow.—Address JOHN H. CLYMER, 4639 Sansom St., Phila., Pa.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

COLLINS, JIM and MICHAEL, brothers, left home in Great Falls, N. H., about forty years ago. Jim now about 55, Michael 53. Both were in Pueblo, Colo., about 1886. Were also in Glenwood Springs, Denver, and Aspen, Colo., in early Eighties. Jim last heard from at Orlando, Ore., about twenty-five years ago, writing he might go to Klondike. Their only sister, Mrs. M. J. Murphy, before marriage Mamie Collins of Great Falls, would appreciate information whether they are living or dead.—Address MRS. M. J. MURPHY, 14 Bentham Rd., Dorchester, Mass.

ROWAN, A. S.; sick in Wichita, Kansas, hospital from blood-poisoning. Any one knowing the results or present address please write to his old pal.—N. J. PARKS, 1815 Main St., Houston, Texas.

WHITNER, WILLIAM and ORLANDO (father and brother). I have not seen them for eighteen years. Might be somewhere in the eastern part of the States.—Address A. L. WHITMER, 1520 Harrison St., Oakland, Calif.

COOK, LUTHER, or any of his family, formerly of Yazoo Co., Miss. Communicate with me.—Address EATHER SHAW, Sunset Heights, Houston, Texas.

Inquiries will be printed three times. In each February issue all unfound names inquired for during the two preceding years, will be printed again.

ESTELLE, ED. J., who was with me in Okla. in January, 1913. Would like to hear from you.—Address O. P. MCMICAN, Fort Mills, P. I., care Stockade.

SMITH, rubber worker., Worked in Hartford, Conn., with me in Spring of 1916. May be in Milwaukee or Toronto. 5 ft. 6 in., slim, light hair and blue eyes. "Gypsy" wants to hear from you.—Address L. T. 346.

POLLOCK, G. A., last heard from in Chicago, 1912, as he was leaving for Mexico. Pol, please write your old chum.—Address L. J. S., care *Adventure.*

CURRAN, JOE; chummed with me in Syracuse last May. Lived in the Bronx.—Address L. T. 347.

MAIDEN, WILSON F.; last seen in Chicago, Ill., Oct., 1913. Your old pal would like to hear from you.—Address A. W. DWYER, Higgins Block, Missoula, Mont.

WALBERT, MORRIS; last heard of at Buffalo, N. Y. Whereabouts unknown. Communicate at once with me.—Address H. WALBERT, 131 N. West St., Allentown, Pa.

HAMMOND, EDWARD; purchased his discharge from War Department at Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, Nov. 29, 1907. After that was motorman on street-car in San Antonio, Texas.—Address MRS. A. SMALLIDGE, 21 Astor St., Boston, Mass.

SEELEY, EDWARD; transferred from cavalry into hospital corps and stationed at Schoefield Barracks, H. I. Communicate with old pal and bunkie.—Address JOHN I. T. GLIDDEN, 20 Fifth St., Bangor, Me.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

HINMAN, W. W.; last heard of was living in or near Rochester, N. Y.—Address FRANK M. HINMAN, 338 N. 15th St., Allentown, Pa.

GRIFFIN, HARRY; last heard of in New York six years ago. Communicate with old-time friend.—Address J. I. GLIDDEN, 20 Fifth St., Bangor, Me.

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THE following have been inquired for in full in either the March or April issues of *Adventure*. You can get name of inquirer from this magazine.

ALLISON, BRUCE C.; Andrews, Frank Lee; Arnold, Edward A.; Ash, Captain George, cowboy; Baust, Henry, crossed Everglades 1912; Beal, George Henry, last heard of in No. Dak. 1912; Beckett, Hugh (Curly); Bedingfield, "Pink"; Brackman, Gus; Caldwell, Earl; Campbell, Webb; Connors, John or Ed.; Crossley, John; DeLano, Frank M.; Dickeson, Arthur D.; Farnsley, Allie A.; Flanigan, Mr. or Mrs., Altoona, Pa., 1909; Flynn, Maurice J., formerly of Co. C, 10th Inf.; Gibson, Arthur E.; Hager, Robert, last heard from in Honolulu; Hassler, Charles; Heckert, Harry H., or "Texas Joe" Tracy; Hoffman, Albert F.; Honey, J. T.; King, Jim; Korns, Paul; Sergt. Shield, Ben Bormer, Henry Pullman, Frank Harrington; Lindsay, Alfred; Lovell, Jack; MacVicar, J. F.; Murph, "Kid" Frank; Murray, "Edith," Sydney, Australia, 1902; Paschall, Hula, last heard of Aug., 1914; Rand, Ferris C.; Raymond, George H.; "Reckless Billy"; Reckless, where are you? Reed, William, left St. John's, N. B., 1876 or 1877; Robinson, Benjamin; Rundle, Edgar; Russell, John Mac. T.; Russell, H. S., formerly of Toronto, Can.; Sargent, Richard Ingalls; Schafer, Jacob; Sells, William M.; Sloane, Howard K.; Stuart, Frank Wm., "Scotsman"; Tompkins, Robert A., "Tex"; Underwood, Lew Ellian—left New Boston, Texas, 1905; Weber, Fred; Williams, Lewis or Bill.

MISCELLANEOUS: American Legion (of Canadian Expeditionary Force) Boys of the 213th Batt., Overseas Batt., C. E. F., also boys of A Co. or Bugle or Drum Corps of Camp Borden; any one knowing the whereabouts of my step-sister, daughter of William Stewart and full brother to John Stewart; Mrs. ——, maiden name Wallace.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

LAWRENCE STEWART, S. N. Morgan, Christian A. Damm, Mrs. Maude Thomas, Hastlar Gal Breath, Bertha Wilkins Starkweather, please send us your present addresses. Mail sent to you at addresses given us doesn't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

NUMBERS 56, 68, 73, 76, W 93, W 167, W 140, W 150, W 153, W 183, W 184, W 189, W 195, W 203, W 211, W 212, W 215, W 231, W 250, C 189, C 205, L. T. 207, L. T. 284, C 293, W 311, W 312. Please send us your present addresses. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

In addition to those stories mentioned in our ad on page two, the following features are booked for the June issue of ADVENTURE, out May 3d:

The Tent in the Mallee *By Hugh S. Miller*
A man-hunt in the wilds of Central Australia.

In Full of Account *By Hapsburg Liebe*
Concerning a lad from the Tennessee hills whose heart was true as a shot from his long rifle.

The Last Wire *By Russell A. Boggs*
As vivid a story as we've given you in many a day. About railroads, and telegraphers—especially a maid, and a man who "came back."

The Long-Haired Jane *By Edgar Young*
Central America. A heart-breaking journey through miles of jungle. A girl with a nerve of steel. Told by a man who has been there.

Malena *By Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur*
The second part of this stirring romance of the old Mexican war shows you what is meant by the "courage of an American."

The Taming O' Andie Macardle *By Fred T. Barton*
You meet those men of bone and brawn in the Southern Kansas coal mines.

That Heathen Chinee, O'Looney *By Patrick Casey*
A barrel of fun in a cow-town, on the edge of the Painted Desert.

The Pearl *By J. Allan Dunn*
A powerful tale of pearl fishing in the South Seas.

JUNE ADVENTURE

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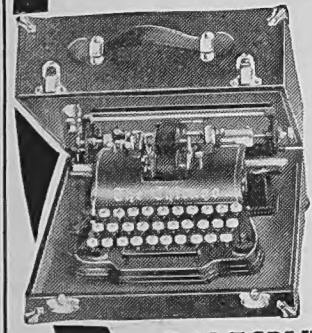
We will ship you this wonderful new visible "Chicago" typewriter on the payment of only $2 down. If you like it, and want to keep it, pay the balance monthly while you have the use of the machine; and when you have paid only $35, the typewriter is your property. We make this very liberal offer so that you can give the "Chicago" a practical, thorough test, compare the work with any typewriter made, and prove to your own satisfaction that it will do the work of any $100 machine. On our favorable terms, you can make this machine pay for itself, and besides

The "Chicago" Will Save You $65 Cash

It has improvements not found on any other machine. It is the only typewriter sold direct from the factory to user that prints from interchangeable type wheels. YOU CAN WRITE IN ANY LANGUAGE, by having these extra wheels—and it is the only machine on which you can address envelopes without running them through the roller. There are 90 letters and characters on every machine, has Standard keyboard, patent eraser plate, etc. The material used in construction is the best obtainable. Handsomely finished in black, gold and nickel plate. Every "Chicago" guaranteed for 10 years. You must see it to appreciate its wonderful value. Everyone can now own a practical, dependable machine, at low cost on the easiest possible terms.



FREE—Handsome Leatherette Case

To all who order within the next 30 days, we will send FREE with each machine, a handsome leatherette carrying case, with handle, making the outfit absolutely indispensable. Fill out the coupon or write at once for full particulars.

GALESBURG WRITING MACHINE CO.
Dept. 260, Galesburg, Ill.

Galesburg Writing Machine Co., Dept. 260, Galesburg, Ill.

GENTLEMEN:—Please send me full particulars regarding your "Chicago" Typewriter, and your favorable terms of sale. It is understood that this does not obligate me in any way.

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Town.....

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A Woodbury Shaving Stick

started making this stick
ur personal use.

ook the same famous form-
nat had made Woodbury's
l Soap *the skin soap*—and
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w we present it to you.

v the Woodbury direc-
for the most satisfactory
you ever had.

1. Moisten your beard thoroughly. Simply wet the brush by holding it under the faucet, and then apply to the face.

2. While your beard is in this wet condition, rub the Woodbury Shaving Stick over it until a light coating of soap adheres to the face.

3. Wet the brush again, and work up a lather. Make it moist and abundant. You are then ready to shave. Warm or hot water gets the best results.

The operation described at th
left most shavers have foun
the best. The individual shave
however, must be guided,
course, by the condition of hi
beard.

Some heavy, wiry beards re
quire a greater abundance o
lather and a more thorough
application than others. With
other beards, better results are
secured with a thinner lather,
and so on. Experience will tel
you what your beard requires.

Tear out the illustration above
and put it in your pocket to
remind you to get a Woodbury
Shaving Stick wherever you
buy your toilet things.

Twenty-five cents at druggists'
everywhere, or by mail from
THE ANDREW JERGENS CO.,
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